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How to Promote Christian Union

An Historical and Practical Handbook

BY

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FOREWORD

Christian unity is the great religious passion of the present day. Men and women in all communions are longing for it, praying for it—groping after it. Could the Restoration fathers of a century ago observe the almost universal sentiment in favor of the union of Christ's people which exists to-day, they might well forget the persecutions and slanders of the older age and say with the prophet, "We have seen of the travail of our souls, and are satisfied."

The story of the pristine unity which was garbled and lost, and is now being found again, is an instructive and fascinating history. Only the barest outlines are sketched in this little volume, which draws whatever merit it possesses from the intrinsic worth and richness of its subject rather than through any graces of its own. That this brief presentation may forward in even some slight measure the great cause with which it deals, is the wish and prayer of the author.



I

The Original Unity

OUTLINE—CHAPTER I

1. DENOMINATIONALISM AND THE EARLY CHURCH.
2. THE WORDS OF JESUS HIMSELF.
3. THE TESTIMONY OF PAUL.
4. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.
5. A TYPICAL APOSTOLIC CHURCH.
6. OTHER PRIMITIVE CHURCHES.
7. THE UNITY OF THE EARLY CHURCHES.
8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

I

THE ORIGINAL UNITY

1. Denominationalism and the Early Church

No one doubts that the original Church of Christ was one. The pristine unity is so clearly emphasized in the New Testament that it can not be questioned. There was a type of apologetics once in vogue which justified sectarian and denominational divisions by an appeal to Paul's figure of the body¹ and its members, but this species of argument has almost entirely disappeared. The obvious fact that the Apostle was writing to a single congregation—that of Corinth—and referring to the diverse ministries of separate individuals in that congregation, is one of the easy bits of New Testament exegesis. So patent is this fact that a journal, representing what was at one time one of the staunchest of denominational bodies, said in a recent editorial: "*Denominational differences and distinctions are badges of human frailty, signifying always somebody's fault somewhere of either insufficient understanding or insufficient consecration.*"² (Italics the editor's.)

Scarcely anybody nowadays defends denominationalism. Those who do defend it, with few exceptions, make no pretense of claiming its apostolic

¹ 1 Cor. 12: 14-28. ² The *Continent*, issue of Aug. 21, 1913.

character. A prominent Protestant Episcopalian puts the matter on this wise: "The Christian unity propaganda is not radical nor destructive. It is constructive conservatism. It conserves the original constitution of the Church."¹

2. The Words of Jesus Himself The Church of Christ did not come into existence as an external organization until after the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. None the less, throughout the ministry of Jesus, there were frequent anticipations of the Church to be. After Peter's great confession at Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus said, "Upon this rock [the truth uttered by Peter] I will build my church."² Again, in another place, in regard to a matter of discipline, he advises his disciples to tell it to the church.³ Everywhere the idea is mentioned or suggested it is unitary. The thought of denominationalism is utterly foreign to the Jesus of the Gospels.

It is in the Gospel of John, however, rather than in the Synoptics, that we find the principle of unity most thoroughly developed. The great intercessory prayer⁴ has long been acknowledged to be the final word of Jesus upon the subject. In praying that his disciples all may be one as he is one with the Father, and the Father one with him, the ideal of Christian unity is rendered so explicit that there is no further need of definition. The most vehement advocate of denominationalism

¹ "The Manifestation of Unity," by Bishop C. P. Anderson.

² Matt. 16: 16-18. ³ Matt. 18: 17. ⁴ John 17.

will scarcely dare argue that separate and warring sects represent the same sort of unity which Christ has with the Father or the Father with him.

3. The Testimony of Paul The Apostle Paul was one of the chief advocates of the early Church. It will not be denied that he was familiar with its character and organization. As a pioneer in the planting of congregations under the most varied and diverse circumstances, he was assuredly in a position to speak with authority upon the subject. It is characteristically fortunate that we have a direct record of Paul's position upon the denominational question. In the church at Corinth certain factions arose, basing their existence upon a fondness for individual teachers or their respective tenets. In this way there came to be a Pauline faction, an Apollonian party, a Petrine following, and finally a group which claimed solely the name of Christ.¹ One does not have to analyze this situation very carefully to discover in it precisely the same conditions which produced the various Christian denominations. The Apostle did not mince matters in condemning the tendency to schism. In kindly but firm tones he "beseeches" the Corinthians "to speak the same thing," to eliminate "divisions" and to be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Very emphatically he argues, using the same tone which Luther and Campbell used centuries later: "Is Christ divided?

¹ 1 Cor. 1: 10-17.

Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"¹

In his letter to the church at Ephesus he emphasizes the same necessity for unity, admonishing the Ephesians "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and fortifying his request by saying: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all."²

There is scarcely one of the Pauline letters which is not saturated with this constant pleading for unity. Writing to the Colossians and referring to the Laodiceans as well, the Apostle exhorts his followers that they remain "knit together in love."³ He warns the Galatians that "if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."⁴ The Romans are admonished "to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁵

In the Pastoral Epistles there is the same unceasing condemnation of schism. Timothy is warned to beware the "perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds,"⁶ and to avoid "foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they do gender strifes,"⁷ and the servant of the Lord "must not strive." Titus is also especially warned against schism and divisions.⁸ There is in fact nothing more char-

¹ 1 Cor. 1:12. ² Eph. 4:4-6. ³ Col. 2:2. ⁴ Gal. 5:15. ⁵ Rom. 15:5, 6. ⁶ 1 Tim. 6:5. ⁷ 2 Tim. 2:23. ⁸ Tit. 3:9.

acteristic in Paul's conception of Christianity than his ideal of complete and perfect unity. Paul was anything but a denominationalist.

4. **The Organization of the Apostolic Church** The word "church" occurs 114 times in the New Testament. In eighty-five cases out of the 114 the word means a local assembly of Christians or what we usually style a congregation. In eighteen other cases it is used in a broad, general way as referring to a general assembly of the saints, something on the order of our "Church Universal." There is no great external ecclesiastical organization mentioned under the title of "church," in the New Testament. There is, however, a fundamental unity presupposed throughout; for example, the "churches" mentioned by the Apostles are geographical congregations and in no sense separate denominations. There is one ideal church finding its realization in separate geographical "churches" everywhere. Thus there existed a fundamental unity, and at the same time entire freedom from the shackles of a formal ecclesiastical organization."¹

The constitution of the apostolic Church was very simple. A follower of Jesus preached the gospel in a given community. Men and women heard the message and believed it. They made open confession of their belief and were baptized. Thereafter they met together for mutual encouragement and inspiration, such gathering consti-

¹ See Vedder's "Church History," Vol. I., pp. 24, 25.

tuting an *ecclesia* or church. The original *ecclesia* was very simple in structure. Its principal feature was the regular observance of the Lord's Supper, which furnished a thread upon which to string the meetings. Aside from the Lord's Supper there were other features of worship: prayer,¹ songs,² exhortations,³ and the like. Of regular organization there was very little. The first officers mentioned outside of the Apostles were the seven,⁴ who may or may not have been deacons. Later, after the first missionary tour of Paul, we hear of elders, appointed evidently after the manner of the Jewish synagogue. The name "bishop" or "overseer" was sometimes given to the elders, as the meaning of the two words coincided. With the exception of these officers and the exceedingly simple organization involved in their appointment, the early Church was practically without any "polity" as that term is generally used. All the complex ecclesiastical machinery of later years was grafted upon this simple origin.

5. A Typical Apostolic Church The Acts of the Apostles contains in considerable detail both the record of individual conversions to the new religion and also the history of the growth of separate congregations. Perhaps the main interest of the book is in a sense biographical, but, even if such is the case, the fact does not interfere with the historical features involved. We have not only vivid pictures of the religious lives

¹ Acts 2: 42. ² Eph. 5: 19. ³ 1 Cor. 14: 26. ⁴ Acts 6: 3-6.

of Peter and Paul, but we have also at least a flash-light view of the churches in Jerusalem, Antioch and Ephesus. The church in the first-named city is described in greatest detail. The fourfold characteristic of its activity may be found in Luke's famous statement, following immediately upon the conversion of the three thousand upon the day of Pentecost: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Here we have in substance the germ of the whole church organization. The "apostles' doctrine" or teaching evidently did not involve dogma or theology, for the fishermen of Galilee never had any theology of special significance; they were not philosophers in any sense of the word. What the term did mean was doubtless the body of practical teaching in regard to the duties and obligations of life which had occupied the attention of Jesus so extensively in his ministry. Original Christianity was a very every-day affair. It dealt almost entirely with the duties and relationships of actual experience: it was not speculative, but practical. The speculative period came later, after Greek philosophy had permeated the Church. When the early Christians "believed on Christ," as we read so often in the New Testament, they did not believe the later theology of the creeds—dogmas relating to the atonement, the incarnation and the like. What they did believe in was the supreme Lordship of Jesus, the necessity of living as he lived and the power of triumphing over death through him.

The term "fellowship" has been variously interpreted. Some have tried to confine its meaning to the weekly offering of Christians, but the word evidently means much more than this. It conveys the idea of social brotherhood, an idea which was very prevalent in the Jerusalem church, and which was forgotten almost entirely by the later organizations. It is coming to life again in the twentieth century as a part of the great social movement of the times. Social service was one of the fundamental characteristics of the early Church, and its neglect was one of the chief causes, or symptoms, of the decadence of formal Christianity.

The "breaking of bread" refers, of course, to the Lord's Supper, evidently an essential feature of the early worship.

The term "prayers" carries with it the idea of ritual or worship, as involving formal supplication and such other features as are of cognate character.

We find, then, that the first Christian church organized on the day of Pentecost embraced five characteristics:

First: It was composed of baptized believers.¹

Second: It was continuously being trained in the practical duties of the Christian life. Fundamentally, this is one of the chief functions of preaching.

Third: It had an exalted ideal, carried out in actual practice, of human brotherhood and social service.

¹ Acts 2: 41.

Fourth: It observed the Lord's Supper regularly.

Fifth: It emphasized the value of worship.

In the above outline it will be observed there is no mention of officers or government. What organization existed at this time appears to have been entirely in the hands of the Apostles, with Peter as the leader. Later, owing to the growing numbers of the church, the seven were constituted to look after certain features of the social duties of the congregation.

This early Jerusalem congregation was no doubt a typical church of Christ. In its simplicity of organization, its practical outlook upon life, its grasp of the problem of social service, and its spiritual emphasis, it presents appealing characteristics which have never since been adequately recognized. When Christianity gets back to the ideal of that first Jerusalem congregation, it will shake the world a second time.

6. Other Primitive Churches

We have the organization and characteristics of other churches given in the Acts, but none in so great detail as those of the Jerusalem congregation.

The church at Antioch is frequently mentioned. Its organization was due to the preaching which followed the Dispersion.¹ It appears to have been one of the first congregations in which the Gentile element predominated. It was thoroughly indoctrinated in the practical content of

¹ Acts 11: 19, 20.

the Christian message through long and continuous teaching by such able instructors as Barnabas and Saul.¹ A striking illustration of the fruit of this teaching is found in the missionary and benevolent activity of the church, especially its contribution to the brethren in Judea.² Here we find the spirit of social service going beyond the congregational pale and reaching out to distant organizations.

The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch, and the Antiochene congregation speedily became of great influence and power in the Christian world. The dispute over circumcision, settled through an informal conference with the Jerusalem brethren,³ as a result of its fortunate ending augmented the influence of the church.

The church at Ephesus was largely instructed and nurtured in its early career by Paul. He ministered to it for three years continuously, and his labors were evidently crowned with success. So successful, indeed, was his preaching that it produced a popular uproar because it had caused a perceptible falling off in the sale of images of Diana.⁴ Elsewhere⁵ it is stated the word of God "grew mightily" and prevailed. Of the general organization and characteristics of the Ephesian church we have little direct information, but we have every reason for supposing that it largely duplicated the church at Antioch. In Paul's farewell address to the elders, he emphasizes especially the insistence which during his ministry he had

¹ Acts 11: 26. ² Acts 11: 29. ³ Acts 15. ⁴ Acts 19: 24-36. ⁵ Acts 19: 20.

placed upon "sound doctrine" and also upon social service. The last sentence of his address—the famous quotation, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—is used to clinch his emphasis upon the element of service.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, after a characteristically superb introduction filled with Pauline metaphysics, we have a treasure-house of practical admonitions which helps us to understand the kind of ideals which were in vogue in the Church. Metaphysician and theologian as Paul was, the practical features of Christianity were so significant to him that he devotes a large part of his Epistles to them.

Glimpses are given, some of them quite illuminating, of the churches at Corinth, at Philippi, at Rome and in other places. Everywhere we find substantially the same story—a Christian church is a group of baptized believers, meeting together for worship, regularly observing the Lord's Supper, keenly alive to the claims of social brotherhood, receiving instruction in the principles of the gospel, and maintaining a simply constructed organization of elders and deacons to carry on its work. As these congregations multiply, we find a sense of common brotherhood and a spirit of co-operation growing up between them.¹ There is no great ecclesiastical organization ruled over by a central head, either in Jerusalem or Rome. Even the eleven seem to have taken their places with others

¹ See Acts 11: 29; 1 Cor. 16: 3; 2 Cor. 9: 1-10, and similar passages.

in discussions pertaining to the common weal.¹ The churches are free groups of men and women striving to realize the ideals of Christ—especially his ideals of service—and clinging to the new-born hope of a glorious immortality. There is no ecclesiastical polity; no theology, in the real sense of the term; no spirit of dogmatic compulsion. None the less, these simple, plain groups of Christ-filled men and women were destined to move the world. Their power was in their simplicity; their strength, as Paul has said, in their weakness. When, later, the spirit of the world, the spirit of external force and ecclesiastical organization, took hold of them, more and more their power disappeared. Samson was shorn of his locks, and the Church for many centuries remained Christian only in name.

**7. The Unity
of the
Early Churches**

From the brief outline already suggested, it will be observed that the unity of the early churches was one of sympathetic co-operation, of voluntary service and of Christian love. They were not held together by the chains of a religious monarchy, nor was there any element of compulsion present save the compulsion of a common brotherhood. There are two ways to unite people; the one is by love and the other by force. The latter form of union is external, artificial, and incapable of securing any of the latent power that lurks in the human personality. The former is internal, spontaneous, and capable of

¹ Acts 15.

securing and enlisting all of the unseen spiritual forces of the soul. The unity of the early Christian churches was the unity of love; it was also, by the same token, the unity of power. It wrought miracles, subdued monarchies, overthrew the sophistical wisdom of the ages and conquered the world in a few generations. The other form of organization which succeeded the unity of love, the binding power of ecclesiastical compulsion, stifled the freedom of the Church, destroyed its social message, eliminated its note of high morality and turned the hands on the dial of progress back for a millennium.

The problem of Christianity to-day is to get back to the unity of the early Church. Our purpose in this chapter has been to outline clearly just what that early unity really embraced. The task of returning to the pristine ideal is comparatively simple, and yet it involves the adaptation of principles to changed conditions of society, and, above all, to unfortunate religious inheritances. Still, there is only one way to the goal, and that way the Church must follow sooner or later. The way to return—is to return.

8. Summary and Conclusion

We have traced briefly the undenominational character of the early Church. From the language of Jesus as well as the testimony of Paul and others, we have been able to see the essentially unitary character of primitive Christianity. An analysis of the apostolic organization discloses the fact that a church of Christ in New Testament times possessed the essential characteristics of

constant emphasis upon practical Christian living, upon social service, upon worship and the spiritual life, and upon regular observance of the Lord's Supper. The only officers were elders and deacons. There was hearty and spontaneous co-operation in deeds of service and missionary activity. There was a unity based upon freedom which unloosed all of the dynamic elements in the human soul.

It remains next for us to trace the darker picture of how this ideal Church gradually faded out of existence, and in its place came a different Church, wearing the same name, it is true, but fundamentally at variance with the ideal outlined above. In sketching this history one preliminary fact must be borne in mind, the fact that the whole genius of Christianity up to this point was unitary. The unity, as we have seen, was one of freedom, but it was none the less unity. When the Church passed from democracy to despotism it used this rallying-cry of unity to suppress all efforts looking toward the regaining of freedom. It condemned in unsparing terms the curse of schism, forgetting the fact that only through schism could the early freedom be regained. From a genuine unity based upon freedom, the Church passed to a false unity based upon compulsion. To regain the true unity, it was first necessary to destroy the false type which masqueraded in its name. This was the function of the Reformation. With the Reformation completed, the next problem is to secure a genuine unity based upon the newly gained freedom. This is the task of Christianity to-day.

But we have anticipated a trifle. Our next chapter must tell how an ecclesiastical despotism grew up in the place of the free church co-operation of the apostolic days. This is what the early Protestant reformers were fond of styling the apostasy. The name is a rather appropriate one, inasmuch as it means a "falling" or "standing from," which is precisely what the process was, at least so far as it related to primitive Christianity. In another sense it was a building upon rather than a falling from the early Church, the building, however, being of such a character as to completely obscure the original. The apostasy was largely made up of accretions which little by little stifled the organism which they covered. The result, in any event, was the same—primitive Christianity passed away, and in its place came the rule of Roman ecclesiasticism.

Questions

1. What is the present-day attitude toward denominationalism?
2. What had Jesus to say about the unity of his Church?
3. Give Paul's testimony to the value of Church unity.
4. Define the word "church" as it is used in the New Testament.
5. Sketch the constitution of the apostolic Church.
6. Give the fourfold characteristic of the Jerusalem church.
7. What was the attitude of the New Testament Church toward dogma?
8. State the five characteristics which the first Christian church possessed.
9. Outline the work of the church at Antioch.
10. What can you say of the Ephesian church?
11. What about ecclesiasticism in the early Church?
12. Outline clearly the character of the unity possessed by the early Church.
13. What is the vital problem of Christianity to-day?
14. Give a brief summary of Chapter I.

II

The Apostasy

OUTLINE—CHAPTER II

1. THE EVOLUTION OF TYRANNY.
2. THE TREND TOWARD MONARCHICAL GOVERNMENT.
3. THE INFLUX OF FOREIGN AND PAGAN RELIGIOUS CONCEPTIONS.
4. THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK CULTURE.
5. ALEXANDRIANISM.
6. ORIENTAL AND DISTINCTIVELY SACERDOTAL INFLUENCES.
7. ECCLESIASTICAL AMBITION.
8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

II

THE APOSTASY

In the preceding chapter we have traced the history of the organization and character of the primitive Church of Christ. We have seen how it possessed in a marvelous manner the two fundamental characteristics of unity and freedom. In the apostolic days both schism and tyranny were unknown, but later these twin demons of destruction were to make their appearance and mar the fair structure of the earlier years. The story of the birth and development of tyranny is a long one, covering over half a score of centuries, so that only the faintest outline can be traced in the few pages allotted to this volume. None the less, the outstanding features are easily discerned and their history is both instructive and interesting.

1. The Evolution of Tyranny The earliest churches organized in the Christian economy were, as we have seen, democratic organizations. The government, so far as any existed, was in the hands of the members of the congregation, made up as it was of free Christians. The elders and deacons were selected by the members, and their offices were in no sense of an absolute character. The words "elder," or "presbyter," and "bishop" are used in the letter

to the Philippians interchangeably and their significance was precisely the same. Of any single officer denominated *the* bishop of a congregation the early record shows nothing. After a time, however, one of the bishops in certain congregations came to be regarded as the leader, after the fashion of the modern "ruling elder," and the others were regarded as subordinate.¹ Still later the ruling bishop of a central congregation came to exercise authority over a group of congregations, and later still he extended his dominion to include the congregations of an entire province and finally of a group of provinces. The last stage in the evolution was the establishment of the Papacy, claiming, as it did, lordship over all the churches and provinces of Christendom. This is a very brief and succinct outline of an historical process which required centuries for its development. The pre-eminent influences in shaping this development were two in number:

First: The universal trend toward monarchical government.

Second: The admixture of foreign and pagan conceptions of religion with Christian.

Strange to say, the history of civil government usually presents the phenomenon of freedom passing into absolutism, and, in many cases, again emerging into a new freedom. The

2. The Trend Toward Monarchical Government

¹ See, for an admirable analysis of this whole process, as relating to the church at Corinth especially, Book I., Chapter IV., of Sabatier's "Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit."

early Greek communities were largely democratic in their government. Athens, as a typical example, presented in the climax of her career the most striking example of pure democracy the world has ever known. Later the decadence of democracy led to monarchical absolutism. Greece as a nation had passed away before the recurring cycles could bring about a new freedom. For centuries preceding the birth of Christ, Rome had been a republic. With the advent of the Cæsars the republic disappeared and the reign of absolutism began. From this time until the days of the Reformation the monarchical principle was practically supreme. Even in so liberty loving a nation as England, the "divine right of kings" was an accepted article of faith held pretty universally by the intelligent citizenship of the land.¹ People put up with any sort of king because they believed that monarchy was the established order of the divine economy. The kings themselves found it both comforting and convenient to hold the same view. Cromwell gave the doctrine its death-blow, but Cromwell lived after the Reformation.

It was only natural that the government of the Church should unconsciously pattern after the governmental ideals of the state. The first Christian writers denounced imperial Rome as the mother of harlots and the incarnation of all iniquity,² but only a few centuries were to pass, and, seated in Rome

¹ Observe Macaulay's treatment of this belief in numerous places in the "History of England." ² See Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. "Babylon" can hardly refer to any other city than Rome.

itself, the monarchy of the Church was to rival and imitate the empire of the Cæsars. The Church captured Rome; Rome also captured the Church.

This almost servile imitation of the civil by the religious authorities is not surprising. Men naturally favor the customs and rules with which they are most familiar. An imperialist in civil matters thus came naturally enough to be an imperialist in the religious realm as well. The monarchical idea was omnipresent in the civil world; it came to be no less omnipresent in the ecclesiastical world. The pope was nothing more than a religious emperor.

3. The Influx of Foreign and Pagan Religious Conceptions

It is very difficult, perhaps we should almost say impossible, for the purest influence to remain unaffected by its surroundings.

Ideals are always tempered by the environment which surrounds them. At the very best there is an unconscious filtration which soon affects the original impulse. The Church exemplified this truism in the very beginning of its history. One needs only study carefully the two Epistles to the Corinthians, or the earlier chapters of the Apocalypse, to find striking illustrations of how even apostolic teaching was modified by circumstances of location and differences of race and blood. Christianity transformed Greeks, Jews and Barbarians alike, but it did not annihilate their hereditary peculiarities and customs. As the new religion spread far and wide it became subject to many adaptations and modifications. When Constantine gave it the imperial sanction the situation

grew worse. Whole groups of people obediently transferred their allegiance from Jupiter or Pan to Jesus, without taking much trouble to distinguish greatly between the old and the new deity. Christian festivals were even given pagan names, and observed with rites and formalities essentially pagan. The festival of the resurrection, for example, became Easter, a name directly borrowed from Norse mythology. Christmas, while retaining the Christian nomenclature, partook largely, in the manner of its celebration, of the old yuletide festivities which it displaced. Christian poets did not hesitate to mingle mythology with the gospel after an astonishing fashion.¹

Among the more uncouth and uneducated peasants of the Roman provinces this pseudo-Christianity assumed various forms. The rank and file readily interpreted Christian teaching and symbols under the forms with which they were more familiar. Hell was easy to understand, for they had known of Tartarus all their lives. Heaven was only another version of the Elysian Fields of their ancestors. The Virgin Mary took the place of Vesta or Diana or Cybele. Names are easily changed; ideas and associations cling with stubborn tenacity. The myriad forms of idolatry which existed in the Roman Empire all contributed their quota to the new universal religion known as

¹ Dante, in the "Divine Comedy," has Vergil as a companion, and many of his descriptions are permeated with mythological characteristics. Michael Angelo, in his enormous picture of "The Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel, depicts Christ and Charon side by side.

Christianity. Of course the new religion modified and destroyed the old forms of the pagan idolatry, but the old forms likewise modified and helped to destroy the new religion.

4. The Influence of Greek Culture Perhaps the most powerful influence which helped to modify original Christianity was Greek in origin. At the time of Christ, Greek thought, no less than Roman law, ruled the world. When the new religion reached up and brought under its sway not only the uneducated and peasant element, but also the refined and cultured society of the day, it was brought face to face with a new problem. Scholars who recognized the significance and value of the new were unwilling to believe that there was not also much truth and substance in the old. Hence arose the numerous so-called heresies which besprinkle the pages of church history during the first three or four centuries A. D. These movements started quite early, certainly before the last books which enter into our New Testament Canon were written.¹

The earliest and most widely known attempt to fuse Greek and Christian ideas was Gnosticism—a movement which nearly captured, and in the end deeply influenced, the Church. A late writer² has characterized it as “the clash and mingling of Christian and pagan systems of thought . . . seen on an enormous scale and through the lapse of centuries.” Another writer³ has well said of the

¹ Especially the Gospel of John and the Revelation. ² W. K. Fleming. ³ Dr. Workman, “Christian Thought to the Reformation.”

results of this clash that the "meeting of the two streams led to a welter, in the whirlpools of which many were lost." Gnosticism assumed many forms and involved various peculiarities, but its underlying purpose was the reconciliation of Greek, and oftentimes Oriental, philosophy with the theology and rites of Christianity. Technically speaking, it failed, but even its failure permanently affected the future character of the Church.

5. Alexandrianism The Christian Church was founded in Jerusalem, but soon gained headway in all of the large metropolitan communities of the Roman Empire. It received its usually accepted name first in Antioch, and the Antiochian church was from the first a large and influential one. Later, three other cities came to rival Jerusalem and Antioch in influence. These three cities were Ephesus, Alexandria and Rome. It was at Ephesus that the Apostle John is said to have lived, and the Ephesian church was long a center of Gnosticism. In Alexandria, however, we find the most striking example of foreign influences entering the Church. The city itself at one time rivaled Rome in size and importance, while as a center of culture it perhaps even surpassed the city on the Tiber. The first Alexandrian to directly influence the Church was Philo Judæus, who was a Jew rather than a Christian, but whose attempt to reconcile Plato with the Old Testament had tremendous influence upon later Christian thought. Philo's ideas were taken up and largely embodied in the work of St. Clement of Alex-

andria. Clement had an eclectic mind which strove to synthesize all preceding philosophy under the form of Christianity. He is on record as having said: "The way of Truth is one: but into it, as into a perennial river, streams flow from all sides." Much of Clement's work was valuable and his broad catholic viewpoint must command our admiration, but none the less his influence measurably modified in the interest of Greek culture the original basis of the Church. Of him, and of many others after him, it has been well said that it became almost a passion "to transfer to the faith and practice of the Church almost every term which was associated with the Eleusinian mysteries and others like them."¹

Origen, the pupil of Clement, who died about the middle of the third century A. D., was profoundly influenced by Greek thought, and read a mystical and philosophical meaning into almost everything in the Bible. Greek theories were discovered in the atonement, the incarnation and the other dogmas of the Church, and historical facts were presented as mystical allegories.

Of Plotinus and the influence of Neo-Platonism we have no space to speak. Suffice it to say that on all sides Greek philosophy and Greek religion filtered into the original structure of Christianity. In the course of centuries these influences produced profound changes in the original constitution and teachings of the Church.

¹ Inge, "Christian Mysticism," quoted in Fleming's "Mysticism in Christianity," Chapter III. See also Fleming's own admirable analysis in the same chapter.

**6. Oriental and
Distinctively
Sacerdotal Influ-
ences**

The Oriental religions, especially the Persian and Egyptian, entered Christianity coequally with the invasion of Greek culture. In the days of the Cæsars, the worship of Isis and other Egyptian deities was widely prevalent in the Roman metropolis, and many of the rites and ceremonies which had originated by the Nile were transplanted to the shores of the Tiber. The Persian doctrine of dualism was the basis of the sect of the Manichees, to which Augustine himself at one time yielded obedience. The mysteries of Isis and Horus in all probability helped to influence the later ritualism of Catholic Christianity. Just what influence the Oriental religions exerted upon the Church of Rome is still a matter of dispute, but the latest authorities incline to the view that the influence was at least considerable.

One of the striking contributions which both pagan and Jewish forces made to Catholicism may be found in the development of the priesthood and the distinction between clergy and laity. The New Testament, it is scarcely necessary to say, knows no distinct body of men denominated as clergy. Every Christian was regarded as a priest,¹ and the early Christian ministers were in no sense of the term clerics. Clement of Rome appears to have been the first writer to refer to the laity as distinct from the clergy,² but after his time the idea devel-

¹ See 1 Pet. 2: 5, and many other similar passages. ² Note Veder's outline in his "Handbook of Church History," Chapter II.

oped rapidly, and by the close of the third century seems to have been almost universally prevalent. Along with the clerical conception came the establishment of an elaborate ritual. The simple worship of the early Christians became rich and ornate, and many of the Greek and Egyptian, to say nothing of Jewish, rites and forms went into the composite ceremonies of the new conglomerate. Even images, pictures and representations of the saints came to be worshiped, and the elaborate ritual of the mass was formulated. Instead of the two ordinances known to the New Testament—baptism and the Lord's Supper—five others¹ were added, making up the mystical number of seven. The manner and form of administering these ordinances were also changed. Affusion came into use instead of immersion in the administration of baptism, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the physical presence of Christ in the last Supper, was taught. After a time the communion was observed less frequently, and, still later, by the laity in only "one kind"; that is, the priest partook of the wine while the others tasted only the bread. To enumerate the changes made in the original apostolic system of Christianity in the course of the thousand years following the era of the New Testament would require a volume. The writer does not believe it any exaggeration to say that between the Latin Christianity of the later Middle Ages and the Christianity of the Acts of the Apostles there is as

¹ Confirmation, penance, orders, marriage and extreme unction.

much difference as originally existed between primitive Christianity and any of the religious cults which it came to displace. May we say again, the early Church conquered the heathen world; the world also conquered the early Church.

7. **Ecclesiastical Ambition** Along with the subtle influences of monarchical ideas and the influx of Greek culture and Oriental mysticism, came the natural temptation which seems to be the unvarying accompaniment of success—the demon of temporal ambition. Jesus recognized the danger of this temptation again and again. When the two sons of Zebedee would have the chief places in his Kingdom, they are told: “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”¹

Even in the very shadow of the cross, his followers wrangled over a question of precedence and were put to shame by their Master washing their feet. History records no more striking phenomenon than the arrogance of Papal ecclesiasticism in the face of Jesus’ teaching concerning humility. The pope, in the height of his power, not only claimed to “exercise lordship,” but to possess the absolute authority of a universal monarch. The arrogance of the medieval clergy is almost inconceivable.

¹ Mark 10: 42-44.

Henry IV., the emperor of Germany, upon being threatened with excommunicatoin, "was compelled to sue for the pope's pardon. He made a journey across the Alps in the dead of winter, and found Gregory VII. at Canossa, where, after a long and humiliating penance, he was absolved."¹ The pride of men like Wolsey and Beaufort came to be proverbial even in a country so far removed from the Vatican as England. No Cæsar in the days of imperial Rome was ever served with such fulsome adulation as was demanded by the ecclesiastical hierarchy which arose upon the ashes of the Western Empire. When one thinks of the contrast between the lowly Jesus, who washed the feet of his followers, and the proud ecclesiastics who trampled kings beneath their feet in the name of Christ, he is conscious of a paradoxical sensation impossible to describe. Nothing more unlike the spirit of primitive Christianity can be imagined. Of all the contradictions in the history of religion this would seem to be the strangest and most inexplicable.

8. Summary and Conclusion

We have seen that the decadence of primitive Christianity began by the institution of a tyrannical organization modeled after the political ideals of the times. In the further falling away from the apostolic customs, external influences, especially the tenets of Greek philosophy, are of notable significance. Oriental mysticism contributed its share toward the production of a conglomerate

¹ Vedder, Chapter VI. For the somewhat disgusting details of the emperor's penance, see any standard history of the period.

Christianity. Combined with these features, the natural passions which beset the possession of power, whether political or ecclesiastical, fostered an arrogance absolutely foreign to the spirit and teachings of Christ. Hence arose, along with numerous changes in the ordinances and constitution of the Church, a spirit of tyranny which violated the fundamental freedom proclaimed by the Galilean. Externally, the Church preserved its unity—a unity of blood and iron, of chains and of absolutism. Such a unity was, however, further from the goal of Jesus than the worst of schisms. Developing further and further away from the ideals of her Master, there remained only one hope of salvation—a revolution which should go back through the rubbish and accretions of centuries to the original form of the early Church. Such a revolution could not but mean division, schism and bitter warfare. Nevertheless, it constituted the only possible escape from an ultimate universal atheism. The human spirit was created to be free. No matter how strong the fetters which may be placed upon it, they must some day fall apart. Religious tyranny means ultimately either religious freedom or atheistical freedom. Without the Reformation, Christianity must in the end have been driven from the hearts of men and from the face of the earth. The world owes much to Martin Luther and his brave companions. The story of the great schism which destroyed the tyrannical unity of the Church must, however, remain for a succeeding chapter.

Questions

1. What is meant by the apostasy?
2. Sketch the evolution of tyranny in Christianity.
3. What two pre-eminent influences were present in this evolution?
4. Outline the general trend toward monarchical government in the Christian era.
5. What foreign elements entered into Papal Christianity?
6. Sketch the influence of Greek culture upon the Christian religion.
7. What is meant by Alexandrianism?
8. How did Oriental influences affect Christianity as embodied in the Church of the Middle Ages?
9. What changes were made in the original ordinances?
10. What can you say of the ecclesiastical ambitions of the medieval Church?
11. Illustrate the Papal arrogance of the Middle Ages.
12. What was the attitude of Jesus toward ambition in the Church?
13. How did the decadence of primitive Christianity begin?
14. In what sense was the Church united during the Middle Ages?
15. What can you say in regard to the desirability of this form of union?

III

The Reformation

OUTLINE—CHAPTER III

1. THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION—
ITS DOCTRINES.
2. THE CHURCH BEFORE THE REFORMATION—
ITS MORALS.
3. THE DAWN OF THE REFORMATION.
4. MISTAKES OF THE EARLY REFORMERS.
5. ZWINGLE.
6. CALVIN.
7. THE ENGLISH REFORMATION.
8. THE WEAKNESS OF PROTESTANTISM.
9. LATER "PROTESTING" MOVEMENTS.
10. THE BAPTISTS.
11. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

III

THE REFORMATION

1. The Church Before the Reformation—Its Doctrines

We have seen that the early Christian Church, as founded by Jesus and his Apostles, was a very simple and intelligible organization. The Church represented in Latin Christianity just before the Reformation was, on the contrary, very complex and unintelligible. It seems proper that, at this point, we should indicate something of the character which this complexity assumed. First in order comes naturally the evolution of doctrine. Doctrine as it applies to religion assumes also a threefold aspect—the triple outline of creed, ordinance and polity. Creed refers to the dogmas or theories which people are asked to believe, ordinance to the acts or ceremonies they are required to perform, and polity to the scheme of government which is imposed upon them.

The creed of the early Church was simplicity itself. When a man became a Christian in the apostolic days, there is no record that he was asked to believe anything more than the great truth confessed by Peter at Cæsarea Philippi, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Through various modifications and additions this simple confession was expanded until the creed of the Church

filled many pages, if not indeed an entire volume. Metaphysical theories as to the nature of the Trinity, dogmas of the incarnation and the atonement, and almost endless speculations as to purgatory, the state of the dead and the like, went into the creedal statement. To cap it all, another article of the creed stated that unless all of these things were accepted and believed, a man would be infallibly damned. No freedom was allowed the intellect, and no choice was given the individual except to swallow all of these speculations or else burn eternally in the fires of the inferno. To recapitulate these creedal statements would require a volume and prove of small profit to the reader. Let it suffice to say that from a simple sentence affirming a living faith in the supreme lordship of Jesus, the Church had spun out a small library of medieval theology, and demanded unhesitating acceptance of its bulky speculations.

On the side of ordinance the change was even more pronounced. The New Testament knows only two ordinances, the initial rite of baptism and the perpetual sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Baptism meant the immersion in water of a penitent believer, while the Lord's Supper was a simple service consisting of breaking the loaf and partaking of the cup after thanksgiving, and apparently observed as the central feature of the weekly meetings of the disciples.

The Church, in the course of a thousand years of evolution, had brought forth seven sacraments in the place of the two pristine ordinances. Let

us note for a moment what these seven sacraments were.

First, in the order usually given, came baptism. The name, however, was about all that appertained to the original rite. Instead of immersion, affusion or sprinkling had been introduced, and instead of the subject being a penitent believer, the ordinance was chiefly administered to unconscious infants. Abstract theological concepts entered into the subject. It was held that by some magical means the rite had power to remove the taint of "original sin," and that therefore even a helpless babe who had not received this mysterious immunity would languish forever in the flames of a remorseless perdition.

The second "sacrament"—confirmation—was administered by bishops only, and was intended to admit into full church membership those who had been baptized in infancy. There is, of course, no hint of such a procedure in the New Testament.

The eucharist was what the early Church knew as the Lord's Supper. In its character and administration it was so different from the early ordinance as to become an entirely new ceremony. Instead of partaking once a week, Christians were only required to celebrate once a year—at Easter. Instead of being a simple memorial, intended to stimulate the Christian to a life of service, it was taught that the wafer when blessed by the priest became the actual flesh of Jesus, while the wine by the same miraculous power was converted into

his blood. This dogma, the doctrine of transubstantiation, was made a definite part of the Church's belief by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. As a result of it, the laity were soon after deprived of partaking of the wine at all, for fear of their spilling some of the blood of Christ. The eucharist was celebrated with an elaborate ritual unknown to the apostolic Church, and usually styled the mass. Thousands of Christians were cruelly tortured and burned alive because they refused to accept this impossible doctrine.

The fourth sacrament was confession, carrying with it also the doctrine of penance. This consisted in making oral confession of sins to a priest, who was empowered to grant absolution for them and to impose such "penance" as he saw fit. The abuses of this system became flagrant and notorious in medieval practice.

The fifth sacrament—orders—was the official setting apart of an ecclesiastical officer for his office. It was performed by a bishop or higher official, and was supposed to convey divine grace and a sort of supernatural efficacy as regards religious duties.

Matrimony was the sixth sacrament. It could be performed by no one save a priest, and any other marriage was regarded as invalid.

The seventh and last sacrament was extreme unction. It consisted in anointing a person at the point of death after a specified ritual, with the idea that such a process had special powers in wafting the spirit to the delights of paradise.

Five of the above sacraments remain unmentioned in the apostolic records, and the other two were so transformed as to become practically different ordinances. Scarcely a single vestige of the original Church of Christ remained in the sphere of ordinance.

In the matter of polity there was a no less notable transformation. The original polity was one of freedom, with the simplest possible organization. In the place of the primitive congregations there arose a complex and composite hierarchy with a supreme monarch—the pope—at the summit of all. We have already spoken of the arrogance of this organization. Anything more removed from the apostolic simplicity and humility than were its pretensions can scarcely be imagined.

2. The Church Before the Reformation—Its Morals

Radical as were the changes in the field of doctrine from the apostolic ideal, the decline in morals was even more noticeable. It was this fact, rather than the doctrinal question, which really started the Reformation. Luther might never have begun his movement had he not visited Rome and witnessed with his own eyes the scandalous behavior of the clergy.¹ Of the moral decline of the Church during the Dark Ages it is impossible to speak with exaggeration. With the laws of the hierarchy forbidding marriage, and denouncing immorality in the clergy, the age witnessed the strange spectacle of a pope²

¹ See Taine's "History of English Literature," chapter on the Renaissance. ² Alexander VI.

—the vicegerent of heaven upon earth—openly placing his illegitimate progeny¹ in positions of high authority, and resorting to assassination and intrigue to overthrow his enemies. Religion said, “Thou shalt not kill,” and the supreme executive in the religious firmament poisoned his enemies at a banquet. The Church said, “Thou shalt not steal,” and the pope pillaged and appropriated whenever it suited his convenience. The Church said again, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and the heads of the hierarchy openly paraded their illegitimate offspring. Actions such as these, to any thinking mind, simply give the lie to all religion. It was no wonder that many of the foremost figures in the Church organization of the day were substantially atheists, who did not always take the trouble to wear a disguise. It is said of a pope of this period² that he openly argued against the immortality of the soul, and remarked upon another occasion that conscience is no more than “an evil beast which arms man against himself.”³ Certain of the clergy, we are told, had a way of saying when they went to church, “Come, let us conform to the popular superstition.”⁴ The licentious and immoral character of the monks of those days may be gathered from the pages of Boccaccio⁵ and Masuccio,⁶ contemporary litterateurs who were in no sense religious antagonists, but who, no doubt, give a fair picture of the times.

¹ Caesar and Lucrezia Borgia. ² Leo X. ³ See Taine, “The Christian Renaissance.” ⁴ Luther as quoted by Taine. ⁵ “The Decameron.” ⁶ “Novellino.”

3. The Dawn of the Reformation

It was in the midst of this seething mass of corruption that Martin Luther, the German monk, struck the note of a new revival.¹ Luther's visit to Rome made a profound impression upon him. He could scarcely believe the sights which he saw with his own eyes. When, later, Tetzel preached his doctrine of indulgences in order to raise money to help build St. Peter's Cathedral, the German leader lost patience and nailed his ninety-five theses to the doors of the Wittenberg church.² These theses were comparatively moderate in tone, and Luther had no idea at the time that he was breaking away forever from the Church of Rome, but the event proved that such was the case. Two years later, in his debate with Eck, he was driven into a more radical attitude, and the final and irrevocable step was taken when he burned the Papal bull of excommunication in Wittenburg.³ From that day the unity of the Church, which had been maintained at least externally for nearly fifteen centuries, was shattered to fragments. The period of division was inaugurated and the early freedom of the Church restored. It was a heavy price to pay for liberty, but liberty is always worth more than it costs.

Luther's movement, from a theological point of view, centered around his great dogma of justification by faith. Fundamentally, however, it was a protest against external authority in religion in

¹ See Taine's "History of English Literature," chapter on the Christian Renaissance. ² Oct. 31, 1517. ³ Dec. 10, 1520.

the interest of the individual conscience. As such, it was only a part of the great birth-struggle of humanity seeking to burst the chains of tyranny and to gain the upper air of freedom. It was a battle for moral independence as well as for intellectual. The idea that external ceremonies and rites could save the soul, Luther saw clearly enough was a pagan doctrine and in no sense Christian. For a man to be flagrantly immoral, and then, because he had gone through certain mechanical religious formulas, to be ushered into the celestial paradise, appeared to him little short of blasphemous. Perhaps the chief contribution of Luther to the cause of religion was his translation of the Scriptures into the German vernacular. For the first time, the people as a whole were enabled to read the Bible in their own tongue and to note for themselves the tremendous discrepancies between the original Church of Christ and the religious forms which they saw all about them. The doom of the Roman Church as a type of universal Christianity was sealed when the Bible was put into the hands of the people at large. Only the excesses of the early Reformers and the great internal house-cleaning of the counter-Reformation saved even a portion of Europe for the Papal See.

4. Mistakes of the Early Reformers The mistakes of the Reformers themselves were numerous and apparent. Luther was a man of rather limited scholarship and of an exceedingly violent and pugnacious disposition. His lack of statesmanship and his bulldog obstinacy nearly

wrecked his cause at the very beginning. Had he been willing to have displayed a fraction of the generous spirit manifested by Zwingli, when the latter, with tears in his eyes, offered his hand to his antagonist after the memorable debate over the eucharist at Marburg, religious history might have been written far differently. But no great man is perfect, and, great as were Luther's faults, his virtues were even greater. Above all other human agencies, the world owes to him the salvation of the Christian religion. He struck out boldly in his search for truth, and, with all his errors, his name will forever remain the brightest and noblest in the brilliant galaxy of reformers who have battled for religious liberty and have striven to free the souls of men.

5. Zwingli

Luther's example was followed by other leaders throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. In Switzerland the saintly Huldreich Zwingli, a far more scholarly and sweet-spirited reformer than the Wittenberg apostle, took the lead. Zwingli came nearer the New Testament ideal, in many respects, than Luther, but even he stopped short of the goal. In matters of polity, particularly, he found it impossible to get back to the apostolic model. His untimely death¹ was a severe blow to the cause of reform. Nevertheless, his work was destined to live, and humanity justly reveres his name as one of the sacred elect in religious history.

¹ At the battle of Cappel, Oct. 11, 1531.

6. Calvin

Perhaps the most distinguished figure in the Reformation after Luther was John Calvin. Born in the little town of Noyon in Picardy in 1509, he received a thorough education in the universities of Orleans and Paris, where he prepared himself for the vocation of law, but later turned to the more seductive allurements of theology. We do not know the processes by which he was led to his religious position, but he says himself that he was "suddenly converted" about the year 1532. His monumental work, the "Institutes," was published at Basel in 1536. It remains to-day as "the most remarkable theological treatise ever published by a young man of twenty-seven,"¹ and at once gave him well-deserved reputation. Calvin was autocratic and severe of temper, and shared in no small degree the religious and intellectual vices of his age. His part in the condemnation and execution of Servetus² must forever remain as a blot upon his memory. His temper was distinctly intellectual, and his cold-blooded theology of election exerted a baneful influence in more ways than one upon succeeding generations. As the founder of the Huguenot faith³ he profoundly influenced French history, and his teachings are still a power in the religious world.

Calvinism gave a deep, though stern and gloomy, basis to the Reformation movements which fol-

¹ Vedder. ² Burned at the stake, Oct. 27, 1553. ³ Strictly speaking, he was not its founder, but in the broader sense the term is not inapplicable.

lowed. Essentially Augustinian, and in a sense Pauline, the theology of the Geneva teacher stopped short of the apostolic goal. As a thinker and philosopher, Calvin had not the grasp upon the practical verities of Christ's teaching which Luther possessed, and the spell of scholasticism weighed heavily upon him. Still, he contributed his part, and it was a great one, in bringing men's minds back to something more vital than the corrupt ecclesiasticism of Rome. The teaching of Calvin must always be reckoned with in any analysis of the religious history of the world.

7. The English Reformation

Of the Reformation in England, semi-political as it was in origin, we have scarcely time to speak at all. Its doctrinal basis was borrowed from Germany and Geneva, and partook of the essential characteristics of Protestantism. In its outward form, however, it clung to much of the old inheritance of Catholicism. The hierarchical idea, with its accompanying unity of church and state, remained, despite the fundamental revolution in theology and doctrine. To this day Anglicanism claims to be neither Catholic nor Protestant, and its professors fondly hope to reunite the Church by drawing both wings to what they consider to be middle ground.

Along with the state Protestantism of the English Church grew up various forms of independency in religion. The most notable of these forms was comprehended in the Puritan movements exemplified in the commanding figure of Oliver

Cromwell. Puritanism was destined to influence America even more pronouncedly than it had influenced England. In the older country it soon split into warring factions and lost its grip upon the life of the nation as a whole. In Scotland it met with greater success. The fiery figure of John Knox appealed powerfully to the stern temper of the northern kingdom, and the intellectual type of the Geneva theology was especially attractive to the most profoundly speculative race of thinkers, with one or two exceptions, the world has ever known. To this day, the Scotchman usually does his religious thinking in terms of Geneva or Basel.

The Reformation, for some reason or other, never touched the heart of Ireland. Racially and temperamentally, the Irish people are widely separated from their island neighbors. Political prejudices helped to widen this chasm and to solidify the adherents of the ancient faith. No nation has remained more completely loyal to Rome than has Erin. The British isles thus presented, and still present, the widest divergence in religion. England is fundamentally Anglican, Scotland adheres as a whole to Presbyterianism, and Ireland alone remains true to the Roman Catholic traditions.

8. The Weakness of Protestantism The leaven of Protestantism has never ceased to work within its own borders. Essentially a movement for independence and freedom, it has again and again witnessed its own unity shattered by the application of its fundamental principle. New Protestants continued to

protest against the ancestral protestation. So far as it has embodied no more than the negative idea of opposing existing evils, Protestantism has never been able to offer the world anything like the universality of Catholicism. Its weakness has always consisted in its lack of constructive power. The world demands not only a negative correction of abuses, but also a positive and universal message of construction. The task of the newer Protestantism is to provide such a constructive message. With it will come the long-dreamed-of reunion of Christendom. The constructive appeal of Rome, with its dogmatic absolutism, belongs to the past. The unifying evangel of the future must be based upon the heritage of freedom gained by the mighty struggle of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin. It must not content itself, however, with a mere reform of abuses existing in an ancient organism. It must go further than this, or it will fail in its mission. The history of later religious development shows that it has awakened to this fact, and in this awakening lies the religious hope of the future.

9. Later "Protesting" Movements

It would require a volume to give in even the barest outline the history of the later developments of Protestantism. Only a few of the more prominent can be touched upon in this brief study. Of these, perhaps the most significant was the new awakening in the bosom of Anglicanism fostered by the Wesleys and George Whitfield.

John Wesley was born in the little parish of Epworth, June 28, 1703. His father, the Rev.

Samuel Wesley, was a clergyman of the Church of England and a man of exemplary piety. His mother, Susanna Wesley, was a woman of remarkable ability and religious insight. John was sent to Oxford along with his brother Charles, some five years younger than himself, and while in college began his "methodical" study of the Bible, along with other devotional practices, which helped to give its well-known name to his later movement. The essence of Wesley's revolt consisted in its reaction from the formalism which had well-nigh eaten the heart out of the English Church. Methodism was therefore a movement within a movement, and in no sense an attempt at organizing a new church or a direct restoration of New Testament Christianity. Wesley himself was always opposed to separation from the Church of England. His idea was to revitalize the old church, much as Luther originally intended to revitalize the Roman hierarchy. The result in both cases was the same. The new wine could not be kept in the old bottles, and, willingly or no, the new church organization perforce sprang into existence. Even to the last, the Wesleys, however, clung to the ancestral faith, and both of them were buried in their surplices as a silent testimony that they died in the communion of the Anglican Church.

The evangelistic fervor of the new apostles was perhaps their greatest contribution to universal Christendom. Every Protestant communion has been touched and vitalized by the Methodist spirit of evangelism. People are drawn together more

by appeals to the heart than to the head, and in this way the Wesleys have contributed not a little to the ultimate union of Christendom.

10. The Baptists The origin of the numerous Baptist parties is more or less obscure. In Luther's time, and for years afterward, they were styled Anabaptists—and they were often associated with revolutionary movements foreign to their real plea. Their chief point of distinction lay in their insistence upon adult baptism alone, and in the performance of the ordinance by immersion. They made no very deep impression upon English or Continental religious life, but in the new continent of America they soon assumed a position of commanding importance. As our purpose here is simply to state the bearing of the various phases of Protestantism upon the problem of Christian union, we can not pause to relate in any sort of detail the features of church history as a whole. The Baptist churches have contributed powerfully to an important and necessary understanding of the New Testament ordinances, but otherwise they have not very greatly assisted the union movement. Their spirit has often tended toward sectarianism, and there are probably few denominations to-day less infused with the desire for religious unity. None the less, the Baptist churches are an important factor in Protestant religious history, and must be given due credit for their staunch and honest insistence upon what they believe to be essential characteristics of universal Christianity.

II. Summary and Conclusion

We have traced briefly the great revolution in the Roman Catholic world which precipitated what is known as the Protestant Reformation. We have shown how this movement was inevitable because of the apostasy of the prevalent type of religion from genuine New Testament Christianity. We have rapidly outlined the salient and characteristic features of the more important attempts at Reformation. We have shown how the external unity of the Church had to be shattered in order that the new internal unity based upon freedom might be born. Christendom was united under an imposing ecclesiasticism foreign to the whole spirit and teaching of Jesus. This ecclesiasticism, with its accompanying corruption and arrogance, had to be broken up before there could be any hope that the real unity of the New Testament Church could be restored. There was a necessary tearing apart which was obliged to precede the putting together of the shattered fragments. It is the question of this putting together which is now the crying problem of the Christian world. With this all-important subject we shall deal more in detail in the chapters which are to follow. We shall see that the process can not be a mechanical piecing of fragments, but must embody the creation of a new and ideal unity based upon a return complete and absolute to the pristine norm of apostolic times. Protestantism in its various forms prepared the way for this return. But something of the original error remained after every new reformation of

Protestantism. Complete return to the apostolic order is yet to be conceived and realized. The steps by which it may be achieved, and is indeed in process of achievement, must now claim our attention. The beginning of the story constitutes the subject-matter for our next chapter.

Questions

1. What is the threefold aspect of doctrine as it applies to religion?
2. What was the creed of the apostolic Church?
3. How was this creed changed during the Middle Ages?
4. What changes were made in the ordinance of baptism?
5. What was meant by the sacrament of confirmation?
6. Interpret the fourth sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church.
7. What was meant by the fifth sacrament? The sixth? The seventh?
8. How many of the Roman Catholic "sacraments" are to be found in the New Testament?
9. What change of polity was made during the Middle Ages?
10. What can you say of the morals of the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages?
11. How did the Protestant Reformation begin?
12. What was the chief contribution made by Luther to the cause of religion?
13. What mistakes were made by the early reformers?
14. Sketch the career and work of Zwingli.
15. Sketch the life and work of Calvin.
16. Outline briefly the English Reformation.
17. What has been the special weakness of Protestantism?
18. Outline the movement of the Wesleys.

IV

Religious Conditions in America One Hundred Years Ago

OUTLINE—CHAPTER IV

1. EARLY RELIGIOUS HISTORY.
2. THE REVOLUTION AND THE AGE OF SKEPTICISM.
3. THE REVIVAL MOVEMENTS OF WESLEY AND WHITFIELD.
4. CREEDAL AUTOCRACY.
5. DENOMINATIONAL FORMALISM.
6. SUMMARY FROM THE "DECLARATION AND ADDRESS."

IV

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN AMERICA ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

I. Early Religious History

America was discovered by a Catholic and rediscovered by a band of Puritans. With the landing of the "Mayflower" on the desolate shores of New England began the first real promptings of national existence. The numerous colonies which soon dotted the Atlantic seaboard brought with them their ancestral religious faiths and traditions in almost multitudinous variety. There were Congregationalists in Massachusetts, Baptists in Rhode Island, Zwinglians in New York, Presbyterians in New Jersey, Quakers in Pennsylvania, Catholics in Maryland and Episcopalians in Virginia. About the only thing in which these various religious bodies agreed was their mutual right to persecute and defame each other. By a strange circumstance, not altogether unparalleled in religious history, the Continental persecutors changed roles with the persecuted in America. The only Roman Catholic colony, Maryland, was the first one to proclaim religious freedom to its settlers, while the persecuted Puritans of England and Holland had no sooner escaped to America than they began to hang, maim and torture those whose religious

convictions differed in some respects from their own.

The Colonial period was so much occupied with the material necessities incumbent upon those whose first duty is to clear the land and till the virgin soil of the forest, that any idea of religious unity must have seemed to the horny-handed settlers as the wildest sort of dream. Probably it would have been a distasteful vision had it ever occurred to them. No religious sect during those days wanted anything to do with any other sect. The problem of how they would get along in heaven with those whose presence was anathema on earth did not disturb them, inasmuch as each separate sect felt that its adherents alone would enter the pearly gates, while all of differing convictions would encamp—elsewhere. Those were the stirring and stimulating days when every man had the comforting assurance that he was infallibly doomed to perdition by every religious body in Christendom save his own. It is doubtful whether many people of this period did not derive greater satisfaction from the contemplation of the eternal damnation of their religious opponents than they derived from the anticipation of paradise for themselves.

With the dawning of national independence, and the rapid dissemination of the non-religious ideas which characterized the movement for freedom in France, came a new outburst of infidelity. The rapacity and corruption of the dominant ecclesiasticism were responsible for the French reactions to atheism and kindred

**2. The Revolution
and the Age of
Skepticism**

theories, while the divisions in the Protestant churches of America nearly produced a similar reaction in the United States. During the latter half of the eighteenth century skepticism found a flourishing field in the thirteen commonwealths. Thomas Paine was one of the most prominent advocates of national freedom, and yet Paine is chiefly known to-day because of his antipathy to the Christian religion. Skepticism was rife in the colleges and universities of the new republic. The limits of this study do not permit us to go into details, but the cursory student will find ample confirmation of the above statements in any standard history of the period. Perhaps no name stands higher, with one exception, among the heroes of the day than the name of Jefferson, and yet Jefferson can not be claimed as an orthodox Christian. The greatest philanthropist of the age was Stephen Girard, and Girard College stands to this day as a silent protest against the divisions of Christianity.¹

It is the testimony of all contemporary writers that the religious life of all the people had reached a very low level. The different sects held rigidly to their own tests of orthodoxy, and, as a result, thinking men of all classes turned in disgust from the Babel of religious voices to seek God in nature or perchance forgot to seek him at all. The reply made by the chiefs and warriors of the Seneca In-

¹ No minister of the Christian religion is permitted to enter the college. The reason for this strange prohibition is said to have been to keep the theological wrangles forever out of the institution.

dians to the Rev. Mr. Crain, a missionary from Massachusetts who was sent to convert them, as quoted in the "Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell," puts the whole situation admirably: "I am come, brethren," said the missionary, "to enlighten your minds and to instruct you how to worship the Great Spirit agreeably to his will and to preach to you the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. There is but one way to serve God, and if you do not embrace the right way, you can not be happy hereafter." To which the sagacious Indian promptly replied: "Brother, we understand that your religion is written in a book. You say that there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agree, as you can all read the book? Brother, we do not understand these things. We are told your religion was given to your forefathers; we, also, have a religion which was given to our forefathers; it teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive, to love one another and to be united. We never quarrel about religion. We are told you have been preaching to the white people in this place. Those people are our neighbors, we are acquainted with them. We will wait a little to see what effect your preaching has upon *them*. If we find it does them good, makes them *honest*, and less disposed to cheat Indians, we will then consider again of what you have said."¹

¹ "Declaration and Address," concluding paragraphs.

**3. The Revival
Movements
of Wesley and
Whitfield**

We have already referred briefly to the origin of Methodism. One of the chief elements in its remarkable success was its catholic charity. In his early ministry, John Wesley complained bitterly of the hidebound sectarianism which he encountered on every side. He writes thus of his reception while on a preaching tour in Scotland:

"I preached at Ormiston . . . to a large and deeply serious congregation. I dined at the minister's—a sensible man who heartily bade me God-speed. But he soon changed his mind. Lord H—— informed him that he had received a letter from Lady H—— assuring him that we were dreadful heretics, to whom no countenance should be given. It is a pity. Should not the children of God leave the devil to do his own work?"¹

Wesley's pungent inquiry was peculiarly applicable to his own age and not altogether inapplicable to-day. From Great Britain, Wesley and Whitfield came to America. Perhaps their most notable success was achieved in the United States. Everywhere they preached to large congregations, and their burning messages largely served to shatter the smug selfishness of the orthodox churches. Even the calculating Benjamin Franklin was stirred by the extraordinary eloquence of Whitfield. The religious movements which followed were all largely indebted to these Methodistic revivals. Not the

¹ Wesley's Journal, quoted in "The Way to Union" by Morton, p. 180.

least contribution of Wesley to a more charitable feeling among Christians was his introduction of hymnology. Previous to his time the orthodox churches as a rule had eschewed hymns. Wesley was not only one of the greatest hymn-writers of the modern world, but he was also one of the most devoted advocates of singing. He astonished the staid Presbyterians of the College Church, Glasgow, by giving out hymns for the congregation to sing. At first the innovation was looked on with suspicion, but it soon made its way into the hearts of the people. Few things have helped to break the ice of religious formality and exclusiveness more than the evangelistic hymns of the Epworth reformer.

Another feature of Methodism which was of incalculable value in promoting the cause of unity was the fact that it united different theologies in a common bond and purpose. Wesley himself was a pronounced Arminian in theology. He believed in the absolute freedom of the will and taught this conviction constantly in his sermons. Whitfield, on the other hand, was a devoted Calvinist, and adhered firmly to the doctrine of predestination and election. While the two were never able to come to an agreement upon these points, they none the less worked together in harmony and their united labors were blessed with abundant success. Wesley wrote to Whitfield upon a memorable occasion:

"The case is quite plain. There are bigots both for predestination and against it. God is sending

a message to those on either side, but neither will receive it, unless from one who is of their own opinion. Therefore, for a time you are suffered to be of one opinion and I of another. But when his time is come, God will do what men can not; namely, make us both of one mind."

Whitfield wrote in a similar temper to Wesley:

"I have lately read the 'Life of Luther,' and think it in nowise to his honor that the last part of his life was so much taken up in disputing with Zwinglians and others, who, in all probability, equally loved the Lord Jesus, notwithstanding they might differ with him in other points. Let this, dear sir, be a caution to us; I hope it will be to me; for by the blessing of God, provoke me to it as much as you please, I do not think ever to enter the lists of controversy with you on the points wherein we differ. Only I pray God that the more you judge me, the more I may love you and learn to desire no man's approbation, but that of my Lord and Master, Jesus Christ."

Wesley and Whitfield, it is true, did finally in a measure drift apart, and yet the influence of their life-work was decidedly unifying, and their ability to sink differences of opinion in their anxiety to accomplish what both conceded to be a higher goal was a wonderful and much-needed object-lesson for Christendom.

The work of the founders of Methodism in America laid the foundation for a better feeling among Christians of all denominations, and yet it scarcely did more than touch the surface. The

orthodox churches cast out the Methodists as they afterward cast out the Campbells, and went on gloriously hating each other. It is fitting that we should pursue a little further the causes and ground of this hatred.

3. Creedal Autocracy

In these days, when man-made creeds are everywhere at a discount, it is difficult to understand the position which they occupied in the religious life of eighteenth-century America. It is only when we read a document like the memorable "Declaration and Address" that we can even faintly appreciate the situation.

"To maintain unity and purity has always been the plausible pretense of the compilers and abettors of human systems, and we believe in many instances their sincere intention; but have they at all answered the end? Confessedly, demonstrably, they have not; no, not even in the several parties which have most strictly adopted them; much less to the catholic professing body. Instead of her catholic constitutional unity and purity, what does the Church present us with, at this day, but a catalogue of sects and sectarian systems—each binding its respective party, by the most sacred and solemn engagements, to continue as it is to the end of the world What a sorry substitute these for Christian unity and love."¹

The creedal statements of church history were always drawn up with the idea of unifying their

¹ "Declaration and Address," as quoted in "Historical Documents," p. 126

adherents. In practice, as the "Declaration" truthfully asserts, they have always proven divisive. Human thought can not be imprisoned within the outworn shell of older speculation. It will always burst the wineskins and escape. This is precisely what it has done in every stage of religious history. The attempt to bind men's thinking by creedal pronouncement was never more amply illustrated than in the religious history of eighteenth-century America. Each sect had its articles of faith, and had no patience with the articles of another sect. To enter the church meant to put your mind into a strait-jacket. It is true there was an almost infinite variety of jackets, but they were all equally guaranteed not to bend or break. Moreover, if you put on one, your action separated you forever from those who had put on others.

5. Denominational Formalism The ideal of religion which was most widely prevalent at this time was largely formalistic. Stress was placed upon specific rites, and these rites were regarded as essentials. The doctrine of infant damnation prevailed in most communions. According to this view, unless a child was subjected to a specific rite of the Church, it was forever lost, in the event of its dying in infancy. The external ceremony, however, removed the so-called taint of "original sin" and transferred its fortunate recipient from the inferno to paradise. Not only was this belief universal in the Roman Catholic Church, but it was also a part of the practically universal faith of current Protestantism.

The belief in the efficacy of formalistic religion led to the widespread refusal to commune together, which was characteristic of most churches of the time. The founders of the later Restoration movement were practically "cast out of the synagogue" because they threw open the Lord's table to Christians of all denominations. Such procedure was regarded as extremely heretical and worthy of severe condemnation. Thomas Campbell's fervent appeal for a more universal charity met with practically no response.

"Oh that ministers and people would but consider that there are no divisions in the grave; nor in that world which lies beyond it; there our divisions must come to an end! We must all unite there! Would to God we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here; that so we might leave a blessing behind us, even a happy and united Church. What gratification, what utility, in the meantime, can our divisions afford either to ministers or people? Have they any tendency to hide the multitude of sins that are so dishonorable to God, and hurtful to his people? Do they rather not irritate and produce them?"¹

6. Summary from the "Declaration and Address" We have already quoted extensively from the great "Declaration and Address" of Thomas Campbell, for the reason that nowhere else is it possible to find such a vivid and accurate picture of the times as is given in this

¹ "Declaration and Address," p. 13.

monumental production. It would be impossible to sum up the whole situation more conclusively than we find it summed up in the opening pages of the "Address":

"What awful and distressing effects have those sad divisions produced! What adversions, what reproaches, what backbitings, what evil surmisings, what angry contentions, what enmities, what ex-communications, and even persecutions!!! And, indeed, this must in some measure continue to be the case so long as those schisms exist, for, said the Apostle, where envying and strife is, *there* is confusion and every evil work. What dreary effects of these accursed divisions are to be seen, even in this highly favored country, where the sword of the civil magistrate has not yet learned to serve at the altar. Have we not seen congregations broken to pieces, neighborhoods of professing Christians first thrown into confusion by party contentions, and, in the end, entirely deprived of gospel ordinances; while, in the meantime, large settlements and tracts of country remain to this day entirely destitute of a gospel ministry; many of them in little better than a state of heathenism, the churches being either so weakened with divisions that they can not send them ministers, or the people so divided among themselves that they will not receive them? Several at the same time, who live at the door of a preached gospel, dare not in conscience to hear it, and, of course, enjoy little more advantage in that respect than if living in the midst of heathens. How sel-

dom do many in those circumstances enjoy the dispensation of the Lord's Supper, that great ordinance of unity and love. How sadly, also, does this broken and confused state of things interfere with that spiritual intercourse amongst Christians, one with another, which is so essential to their edification and comfort, in the midst of a present evil world;—so divided in sentiment, and, of course, living at such distances, that but few of the same opinion or party can conveniently and frequently assemble for religious purposes, or enjoy a due frequency of ministerial attentions. And even where things are in a better state with respect to settled churches, how is the tone of discipline relaxed under the influence of a party spirit; many being afraid to exercise it with due strictness, lest their people should leave them, and, under the cloak of some spurious pretense, find refuge in the bosom of another party; while, lamentable to be told, so corrupt is the Church, with those accursed divisions, that there are but few so base as not to find admission into some professing party or other. Thus, in a great measure, is that Scriptural purity of communion banished from the Church of God; upon the due preservation of which, much of her comfort, glory and usefulness depends. To complete the dread result of our woeful divisions, one evil yet remains, of a very awful nature: the divine displeasure justly provoked with this sad perversion of the gospel of peace, the Lord withholds his gracious influential presence from his ordinances; and not unfrequently gives up the con-

tentious authors and abettors of religious discord to fall into grievous scandals; or visits them with judgments, as he did the house of Eli. Thus while professing Christians bite and devour one another, they are consumed one of another, or fall a prey to the righteous judgment of God. Meantime, the truly religious of all parties are grieved, the weak stumble, the graceless and profane are hardened, the mouths of infidels opened to blaspheme religion; and thus the only thing under heaven, divinely efficacious to promote and secure the present spiritual and eternal good of man, even the gospel of the blessed Jesus, is reduced to contempt; while multitudes deprived of the gospel ministry, as has been observed, fall an easy prey to seducers, and so become the dupes of almost unheard-of delusions."

Questions

1. Sketch the early religious history of America.
2. What was the attitude of American churches toward the problem of union in the Colonial period?
3. What can you say of skepticism during the American Revolution?
4. Outline the reply of the chiefs of the Seneca Indians to a Massachusetts missionary.
5. What influence did John Wesley's movement have upon the question of union?
6. What was the attitude of the Protestant Christians at the beginning of the nineteenth century in regard to the question of creed?
7. Why did the creeds of the time fail to unify?
8. How did denominational formalism affect the question of union?
9. Sketch Thomas Campbell's views in the "Declaration and Address."
10. What can you say of the hatred and jealousy which Christians of this age felt toward each other?

V

The Restoration Movement—Its Beginning

OUTLINE—CHAPTER V

1. MORAL CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY.
2. PRACTICAL RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS
3. THE CANE RIDGE REVIVAL.
4. THE SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY.
5. THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF THE
SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY.
6. THE WITNESSES' ADDRESS.
7. FINAL CAREER OF STONE AND HIS COM-
PANIONS.

V

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT—ITS BEGINNING

I. Moral Condition of the Country

We have drawn a hasty sketch of the religious condition of America at the close of the eighteenth century. The divisions prevalent in the Christian world, combined with the new influx of French infidelity, produced an alarming decadence in morality. The Presbyterian General Assembly in 1798 issued a general letter containing the following epitome of the situation:

“Formidable innovations and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion. Scenes of devastation and bloodshed unexampled in the history of modern nations have convulsed the world, and our country is threatened with similar concomitants. We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principles and practice among our fellow-citizens, a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and institutions of religion, and an abounding infidelity, which in many instances tends to atheism itself. The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportionate to our declension in religion. Profaneness; pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness, and every

species of debauchery and loose indulgence, greatly abound."

Contemporary historians testify that this picture was not overdrawn. These were the days when members of Christian churches regularly drank to intoxication, and when the clergy was little, if any, better than the laity. As late as the year 1820 a New York pastor has left the statement on record that it was a difficult matter to make pastoral visits for a day without becoming intoxicated. One of the best known authorities for the history of the period, the Rev. Daniel Dorchester, D.D., quotes a minister who said that he could "reckon up among his acquaintances forty ministers who were either drunkards, or so far addicted to the use of strong drink that their usefulness was impaired." This same man stated that he was present at an ordination at which two aged ministers were literally drunk.¹

During these times respect for the Lord's Day was practically unknown. Gambling, drinking and carousing were more widely prevalent on Sunday than upon any other day of the week. Peter Cartwright, the famous backwoods evangelist, has left on record his impression of the moral condition of the people. One needs only read his stirring words to realize the gravity of the situation. These were also the days when the Kentucky Legislature moved to dispense with the services of the chaplain, and the motion carried by a substantial majority.

¹ See B. B. Tyler's "History of the Disciples of Christ," Chap. I.

2. Practical Religious Conditions

The circumstances just mentioned naturally produced a falling away of even the nominal adherents of Christianity. We have referred to this condition before, but a few facts illustrating the situation may make the picture stand out more distinctly.

The venerable Timothy Dwight, during his incumbency as president of Yale University, testified that at the beginning of his administration in 1795 only four or five students were professing Christians. At Princeton and Harvard the situation was little, if any, better. At Bowdoin College, at one time during this period, there was only one student in the school who openly avowed himself a Christian. Voltaire made his famous boast in regard to the disappearance of the Christian Scriptures about this time, and most of people believed that the boast would come true. Educated men everywhere were ashamed to acknowledge that they believed in Christianity. Tom Paine's works obtained a circulation equal to or surpassing that of any book of orthodox literature, and there were few houses which were not supplied with a copy of "The Age of Reason" and "Common Sense." Volney and Voltaire were widely read and universally admired. The widespread sympathy with France due to the alliance of Revolutionary times helped to swell the tide. Lyman Beecher, who was graduated from Yale as a member of the class of 1797, says that the members of the class of '96 were popularly known to one another as Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, etc.

Mr. Beecher further says that these were the days of the Tom Paine school, "when the boys who dressed flax in the barn read Tom Paine and believed him." Bishop Meade, we are told, as late as the year 1810 in Virginia made the statement that he never met an educated young man without expecting him to be either a skeptic or an out-and-out unbeliever. The eminent jurist, Chancellor Kent, bore similar testimony. Among educated people universally, in all ranks and professions, skepticism was the rule and positive faith the exception. So strong was the tide that, in cultured Boston, men of standing, something after the fashion of Nicodemus, when they went to church often disguised themselves in order not to incur the ridicule and disdain of the community at large. It is said that in 1800 Boston, which had been the center and core of the Congregational movement, retained only one church loyal to the old faith. The bigotry and divisions of Protestant sects had brought religion to a serious and alarming condition. A somewhat amusing illustration of how far this bigotry extended is given in Tyler's "History of the Disciples," as follows:

"President Wayland, in 'Notes on the Principles and Practices of the Baptists,' says that in the early part of his ministry he was settled in an intelligent community in the goodly commonwealth of Massachusetts. In his church was a gentleman reputed to be intelligent in the doctrines of the denomination, the son of a Baptist minister, who had an interesting family, but devoted to worldliness.

Dr. Wayland expressed to the father a desire to speak to the young people on the subject of personal religion. To this the father objected! He assured the pastor that he wished no one to speak to his sons and daughters on the subject of personal piety; if they were of the elect, God would convert them in his own good time; and if they were of the non-elect, such conversation as Dr. Wayland suggested would probably make them hypocrites.”¹

It is little wonder that Dr. Dorchester should say in his “Christianity in the United States” that “the most pious people in the beginning of the present century [1800] in the United States entertained a faith so unlike the present belief of evangelical Christians as to almost create the impression on our minds that their religion was not the same as the religion which we now have, and in which we believe.”

These were, moreover, the days when a majority of professing Christians opposed the introduction of Sunday schools, Bible societies and missions on the ground that these things conflicted with the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of election.

3. The Cane Ridge Revival The beginning of the movement for the definite restoration of the New Testament Church, as furnishing the only possible basis for Christian

¹ See Tyler's "History of the Disciples," p. 6. We are indebted to this excellent manual for other information contained in this chapter. We recommend its perusal to all who are further interested in the subject of which it treats.

unity, must be fairly dated from the great Cane Ridge revival of Barton W. Stone. Barton Warren Stone was born near Port Tobacco, Maryland, December 24, 1772. His father died during the infancy of his son, and in 1779 the widowed mother moved to the backwoods of Virginia, near the Dan River in Pittsylvania County. From his early boyhood Stone was an omnivorous reader and a student of exceptional promise and ability. At first he aspired to become a lawyer. During his college career, however, he was converted and turned his attention to the ministry. From the first he had scruples about the rigid theology of the Presbyterian Church, to which he belonged, and these scruples delayed his ordination. Finally he received a license to preach, and after a short ministry in Virginia and North Carolina he made his way in 1796 through the wilderness into Kentucky. In the fall of 1798 he received a call to preach for the churches at Cane Ridge and Concord, Bourbon County. On July 2, 1801, he married Elizabeth Campbell, of Virginia, and upon his return to Cane Ridge announced that he would begin a revival the Thursday or Friday before the third Lord's Day in August, 1801. This meeting, known as the Cane Ridge revival, was one of the most extraordinary in the early religious history of America. Conservative estimates placed the attendance at thirty thousand. The assembly lasted for seven days and seven nights, and was only discontinued because of the difficulty of furnishing food for so vast a multitude. Four or five preachers spoke at the same

time in different parts of the encampment without confusion. Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian preachers united in proclaiming the gospel. Stone himself, in his account of the revival, says: "We all engaged in singing the same songs, all united in prayer, all preached the same things." "The number of converts," he adds, "will be known only in eternity."

The result of this revival was most salutary. The Rev. George A. Baxter, D.D., in a letter to Dr. Archibald Alexander, describing a visit to Kentucky soon after the revival, uses the following language:

"On my way I was informed by settlers on the road that the character of Kentucky travelers was entirely changed, and that they were as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissoluteness and immorality; and, indeed, I found Kentucky, to appearances, the most moral place I had ever seen. A profane expression was hardly ever heard. A religious awe seemed to pervade the country. Upon the whole, I think the revival in Kentucky the most extraordinary that has ever visited the Church of Christ, and, all things considered, it was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country into which it came. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion was on the point of expiring. Something extraordinary seemed necessary to arrest the attention of a giddy people who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a delusion. This revival has done it. It has confounded infidelity, and brought

numbers beyond calculation under serious impressions.”¹ Other writers bear similar testimony.

4. **The Springfield Presbytery** Notwithstanding the good effects of the Cane Ridge revival, it was not long before the character of the preaching which produced it was called in question by the orthodox members of the church to which Stone belonged. As to what the doctrines preached were, Stone’s own testimony may be accepted. He says:

“The distinguishing doctrine preached by us was that God loved the world—the whole world—and sent his Son to save men on condition that they would believe in him; that the gospel was the means of salvation; that this means would never be effectual to this end until believed and obeyed; that God required us to believe in his Son and had given sufficient evidence in his Word to produce faith, if attended to by us; that sinners are capable of understanding and believing this testimony, and of acting upon it by coming to the Saviour and obeying him; that from him may be obtained salvation and the Holy Spirit. We urged upon sinners to believe now and receive salvation; that in vain they looked for the Spirit to be given them while they remained in unbelief; that they must believe before the Spirit or salvation would be given; that God was as willing to save them now as he ever was or ever would be; that no previous qualification was required, or necessary, in order to believe in

¹ Tyler’s “History of the Disciples,” pp. 17, 18.

Jesus and come to him; that if they were sinners, this was their divine warrant to believe in him and come to him for salvation; that Jesus died for all and that all things were now ready. When we first began to preach these things the people appeared as just awakening from a sleep of ages. They seemed to see for the first time that they were responsible beings, and that a refusal to use the means appointed was a damning sin.”¹

This sort of preaching, thoroughly orthodox in almost any community to-day, was heresy of an extreme type from the prevailing point of view in 1801. It was not long before one of the Cane Ridge preachers named Richard McNemar was cited for trial before the presbytery. The result of the trial was that he was condemned for preaching doctrines contrary to the “Confession of Faith.” Five others—John Thompson, John Dunlavy, Robert Marshall, B. W. Stone and David Purviance—were involved in the same heresies, and with McNemar banded themselves together in a new organization known as the Springfield Presbytery. They soon after set forth their position in an historic document known as “The Apology of Springfield Presbytery.” This “Apology” took advanced ground especially upon the question of creeds. It declared unequivocally in favor of abandoning all human creeds as tests of fellowship, and affirmed that the Bible alone was “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteous-

¹ “Autobiography of Barton W. Stone,” Chap. VII.

ness." Moreover, by the Bible, and the Bible alone, "the man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The Springfield Presbytery remained in existence only a short time. It was not long before its members discovered that the name of the organization could not be found in the Bible, which they had accepted as their only rule of faith and practice. Their own standard, therefore, demanded a change of organization. This was accomplished in June, 1804, through a remarkable document known to history as "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery." In its own way this pronouncement was as revolutionary as the "Declaration and Address," and it is worth while to pause for a brief synopsis of its contents.

The "Will" itself is brief, compact, and permeated throughout with the most advanced ideas regarding Christian union. It is written in a vein of good-natured humor quite different from the tremendous seriousness of the immortal document of Thomas Campbell. It begins as follows:

5. The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery

"The Presbytery of Springfield, sitting at Cane Ridge in the county of Bourbon, being, through a gracious Providence, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in health and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; but knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die: and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and

ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following:"¹

Then follows a list of items, declaring in brief and succinct form the freedom of all Christians to worship according to no other rules than those provided in the Bible, and to be governed in no other way than that which was prevalent in the apostolic Church. The broad, catholic point of view of the manifesto is well exemplified in the first article:

"Imprimis, We *will*, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one Body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling."

It is doubtful whether the annals of religious history furnish a higher ideal of self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of union than is afforded in this article. Stone and his companions will to sink their own organization out of sight in order that they may become simply members of the great Church of Christ universal, the elect of all climes and communions and ages. The vein of gentle irony comes out finely in Article 7, which reads after this fashion:

"Item, We *will*, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life

¹ "Last Will and Testament: Historic Documents Advocating Christian Union," pp. 19, 20.

having one book, than having many to be cast into hell."

In the light of the tide now setting so strongly against denominationalism everywhere, the final article, written, it will be remembered, over a hundred years ago, sounds strangely prophetic.

"Item, Finally we *will*, that all our sister bodies read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late." These are forward-looking words.

Appended to the "Last Will and Testament" is a brief statement¹ by way of explanation, which is so admirable in substance and spirit that we are constrained to quote from it at large. It sets forth the ideal of Christian unity in a manner absolutely epoch-making in the history of Christianity. When the final page is written in the great story of the reunion of the divided Church, these words will stand out pre-eminent in the literature of the ages:

"With deep concern they [the witnesses to the "Last Will and Testament"] viewed the divisions and party spirit among professing Christians, principally owing to the adoption of human creeds and forms of government. While they were united under the form of a Presbytery, they endeavored to cultivate a spirit of love and unity with all Christians; but found it extremely difficult to suppress the idea that they themselves were a party

¹ The "Witnesses' Address."

separate from others. The difficulty increased in proportion to their success in the ministry. Jealousies were excited in the minds of other denominations; and a temptation was laid before those who were connected with the various parties, to view them in the same light. At their last meeting they undertook to prepare for the press a piece entitled 'Observations on Church Government,' in which the world will see the beautiful simplicity of Christian church government, stripped of human inventions and lordly traditions. As they proceeded in the investigation of that subject, they soon found that there was neither precept nor example in the New Testament for such confederacies as modern Church Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, General Assemblies, etc. Hence they concluded, that while they continued in the connection in which they then stood, they were off the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, of which Christ himself is the chief corner-stone. However just, therefore, their views of church government might have been, they would have gone out under the name and sanction of a self-constituted body. Therefore, from a principle of love to Christians of every name, the precious cause of Jesus, and dying sinners who are kept from the Lord by the existence of sects and parties in the Church, they have cheerfully consented to retire from the din and fury of conflicting parties—sink out of the view of fleshly minds and die the death.”¹

¹ "Historic Documents," pp. 24, 25.

7. Final Career of Stone and His Companions

Few men who have caught the vision of a splendid ideal at some exalted moment in their lives are able to remain faithful to it when the slow, enervating tug of reaction catches them in its embrace. Of the six who signed the immortal "Last Will and Testament," only two remained true to their ideal to the end. These two were Stone, the leader, and David Purviance, his youngest follower. Of the others, Marshall, after converting Stone to a belief in immersion as the only New Testament form of baptism, reacted himself and returned to orthodox Presbyterianism. His presbytery required an open recantation of his heresies, much after the fashion of the Inquisition of older times, and he made the recantation. McNemar and Dunlavy joined the Shaker community and afterward left it. Their later history is practically unknown. Thompson, like Marshall, returned to the orthodox fold.

Stone and Purviance remained true to their plea of universal Christian union on the basis of the Bible alone. They lived to see their followers number a mighty host, and still later to throw their strength into the resistless current started elsewhere by the Campbells. Among the apostles of religious freedom, few names outshine that of Barton Warren Stone. Gentle in temper, fervent in spirit, catholic in sympathy, with a far-seeing intellect, altogether beyond the sweep of his own day, he stands out as one of the peculiarly sublime figures in the great quest for Christian union.

He realized, as few religious leaders have ever realized, that the words "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it," and "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it," apply to churches no less than to individuals. The Springfield Presbytery was willing to lose its life, and it has found the infinitely larger life of the great movement for world-wide Christian union.

Questions

1. Sketch the moral and religious condition of America at the close of the eighteenth century.
2. What situation prevailed in the colleges?
3. What authors were most widely read by the people?
4. What attitude was common toward the question of religion on the part of people of all classes?
5. How did the Cane Ridge revival come about?
6. Sketch the life of B. W. Stone.
7. What was the result of the Cane Ridge revival?
8. Sketch the organization of the Springfield Presbytery.
9. How did the Springfield Presbytery come to an end?
10. Give the substance of the "Last Will and Testament."
11. Summarize the "Witnesses' Address."
12. What became of the signers of the "Last Will and Testament"?
13. What was the special influence of Barton W. Stone upon the movement for Christian union?

VI
The Restoration Movement
(Continued)

OUTLINE—CHAPTER VI

1. THE CAMPBELLS.
2. THE DECLARATION AND ADDRESS.
3. THE CAMPBELLS AND BAPTISM.
4. UNION WITH THE BAPTISTS.
5. THE SERMON ON THE LAW.
6. FINAL BREAK WITH THE BAPTISTS.
7. UNION WITH STONE AND HIS FOLLOWERS.
8. LATER PROGRESS OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT.

VI

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (Continued)

1. The Campbells The names usually associated with the definite organization of the nineteenth-century movement for the restoration of New Testament Christianity are those of Thomas and Alexander Campbell. It may be well at this juncture to sketch briefly the history of these two remarkable characters.

Thomas Campbell was born February 1, 1763, in County Down, Ireland. His father, Archibald Campbell, was at one time a member of the Roman Catholic Church, but left that communion to become a Protestant Episcopalian. Thomas Campbell in turn left the Episcopalian fold to enter that of the Seceder branch of the Presbyterian Church. Thomas Campbell was a man of remarkable piety from his youth, and early distinguished himself by his efforts to harmonize the different factions of Presbyterianism existing at that time in Ireland. His efforts in this direction were for the most part futile, but his failures only made more clear to his own mind the sinfulness of sectarian divisions. Of one of these failures a gentleman who knew Alexander Campbell while the latter was a student in the University of Glasgow remarked:

"I listened to your father in our General Assembly in the city, pleading for a union between the Burghers and Anti-Burghers. But, sir, while in my opinion he outargued them, they outvoted him."

In 1807 Thomas Campbell came to America and settled in western Pennsylvania. He soon obtained employment as a minister in the Presbytery of Chartiers near Pittsburgh. While preaching in this section he incurred the displeasure of some of his parishioners by inviting the members of other communions to partake of the Lord's Supper in his own church. For this offense he was tried before the presbytery to which he belonged, and was found guilty. He appealed to the Associate Synod of North America, and, after a hearing of his case made notable by his own eloquent defense, the sentence was reversed and he was relieved of the censure administered by his presbytery. None the less, the relations between himself and his church from this time became strained to the point of open rupture. In the meantime, his son Alexander arrived from Scotland in the autumn of 1809. Alexander at this time was a little over twenty-two years of age, having been born in Ireland, September 12, 1788. The young man was well educated, his major training having been received in one of the great Scottish schools—the University of Glasgow. Upon arriving in America, Alexander warmly espoused the cause of his father and at once became his chief lieutenant. Not long after the arrival of Alexander Campbell in America, he and his father withdrew from the Presbytery of Char-

tiers and organized a new association of Christians, somewhat analogous to Stone's Springfield Presbytery. The new organization was styled "The Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania."

It was no part of the Campbells' idea to organize a new church. Nothing, indeed, could have been more foreign to the union ideas of Thomas especially, than to add another body to the already too numerous sects of Christendom. In organizing the "Christian Association" the only thought of its founders was to labor "as a society for the promotion of Christian union under the auspices and with the approval of the Presbyterian Church, and thus avoid the organization of a new denomination."¹ On this point Dr. Richardson, the authorized biographer of Alexander Campbell, says, however, that "the society must obtain admission into some regularly organized religious body, or be itself compelled to change its attitude and resolve itself into an independent church—an alternative which Thomas Campbell particularly desired to avoid. It was this very dread of the ultimate formation of a new religious body that caused him to overlook the absurdity of expecting that any sect would receive him, and the society he represented, on the terms proposed. For a party to have admitted into its bosom those who were avowedly bent on the destruction of partyism would, of course, have been perfectly suicidal."²

A movement having as its ideal the destruction

¹ Tyler. ² "Memoirs of Alexander Campbell," Vol. I., p. 330.

of denominationalism could not, of course, be accepted by a denomination. The practical situation, however, seemed either to be accepted by an existing denomination or else to create a new one. To both of these alternatives the Campbells were opposed, though of the two they undoubtedly preferred the former to the latter.

2. The Declaration and Address Shortly after the Christian Association was organized, Thomas Campbell prepared an elaborate statement of his position and published it under the title of the "Declaration and Address." This production has been well styled the Magna Charta of the Restoration movement. In the annals of Christian literature it would be hard to find a more irenic or broad-minded composition. It takes its place as one of the truly epoch-making documents of religious history. Every student of Christian union should begin his work by reading the "Declaration and Address." Perhaps the most notable thing about it is the spirit of Christian charity which it breathes throughout. There is not a touch of the controversial, none even of the good-humored irony of Stone and his companions. The Campbells were too serious for levity. They were cut to the quick by the bitter dissensions of professing Christians, and were only anxious to heal the wounds in the visible body of Christ. We can not, in the limited space at our disposal, quote at length from the "Declaration," but feel it absolutely essential that we should at least give a brief summary of the propositions regarding belief which it contains.

These propositions are thirteen in number. The first is so significant that it must be quoted entire in the language of the author.

“Proposition I. That the Church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally and constitutionally one, consisting of all those in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else; as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.”

This first article should be given a place in the highest category of those uninspired expressions which have helped to pave the way for Christian union. Like the immortal utterances of Stone, these words touch the highest level in Christian idealism. No better definition of a Christian has ever been given, nor has the ideal of Christian unity ever received more terse or full-orbed expression.

Proposition II. acknowledges the necessity for separate local organizations of Christians, but insists that there “ought to be no schisms or uncharitable divisions among them.” They “ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

Proposition III. was epoch-making in that it declared that Christians should be bound by no rule of faith or practice save the word of God. The concluding terms of the statement, “Nor ought anything to be admitted, as of divine obligation, in

their Church constitution and management, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the New Testament Church; either in express terms or by approved precedent," when read by his father to Alexander elicited the prompt reply from the latter, "Then, sir, you must abandon and give up infant baptism and some other practices for which, it seems to me, you can not produce an express precept or an express example in any book of the Christian Scriptures." Thomas Campbell replied, after a pause: "To the law and the testimony we make our appeal. If not found therein, we must of course abandon it."

Proposition IV. distinguishes between the purpose and value of the Old Testament Scriptures and the purpose and value of the New. It declares that the latter alone contain the constitution of the New Testament Church.

Proposition V. declares that "nothing ought to be received into the faith or worship of the Church, or be made a term of communion among Christians, that is not as old as the New Testament." This proposition asserted the invalidity of Church tradition or human creeds as binding upon Christians.

Proposition VI. acknowledges the value of Christian theology, tradition and inference, but claims that this value is not such as to give it binding power upon the consciences of Christians. No such material should therefore go into a confession intended for the Church universal.

Proposition VII. continues the thought sug-

gested in V. and VI., and elaborates it further by calling attention to the impossibility of highly speculative dogmas ever being understood by the bulk of the adherents of the Church, even though they should be doctrinally correct. A creed which can be understood by scholars alone is not the true creed for the Church universal, for "the Church from the beginning did, and ever will, consist of little children and young men, as well as fathers."

Proposition VIII. states that no elaborate profession should be demanded for church membership, but only a simple confession of faith in Jesus Christ and an expressed willingness to accept his lordship in all things.

Proposition IX. is a beautiful statement of the brotherhood of all Christians, so beautiful that it deserves at least partial quotation. It says that all followers of Christ should manifest the reality of their profession "in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and Father, temples of the same Spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same divine love, bought with the same price, and joint-heirs of the same inheritance."

Proposition X. is an equally forcible statement of the sin and folly of Christian divisions, claiming that they are "antisciptural, antichristian and anti-natural."

Proposition XI. claims that a neglect of the

revealed will of God, combined with the assumption of unwarranted authority on the part of men, is responsible for "all the corruptions and divisions that have ever taken place in the Church of God."

Proposition XII. defines membership in the Church as solely dependent upon the acceptance of and adherence to the Scriptures; that ministers should preach no doctrines as binding save those thus revealed, and that the divine ordinances should be observed "after the manner of the primitive Church exhibited in the New Testament, without any additions whatsoever of human opinions or inventions of men."

The thirteenth and last proposition grants full liberty to human expedients for the promotion of the work of the Church, where there is no divine command governing the case. These expedients may be altered from time to time as occasion demands, and should never produce any contention or division in the Church.¹

3. The Campbells and Baptism The "Declaration and Address" stated that its purpose was to prepare the way for a permanent Scriptural unity among Christians, by calling to their consideration fundamental truths, "directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling-blocks—the rubbish of ages, which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing toward the desired object they may not

¹ See "Declaration and Address," Centennial edition.

miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left.”¹ With this ideal in mind, on May 4, 1810, a few Christians gathered together in a congregation known as “The First Church of the Christian Association of Washington, meeting at Cross Roads and Brush Run, Washington County, Pennsylvania.” The Lord’s table was spread every Lord’s Day, and all Christians were welcomed to it. The Campbells at this time accepted the traditional views of their church in regard to baptism, but it was not long before their independent study of the Scriptures led them not only to abandon infant baptism, but also to regard immersion as the only Scriptural form of the ordinance. The ultimate result was that on the 12th day of June, 1812, Alexander Campbell and his wife, Thomas Campbell and his wife, Miss Dorothea Campbell and Mr. and Mrs. James Hanen were immersed by Elder Matthias Luce, of the Baptist Church. Before going into the water, Thomas Campbell delivered a lengthy address, setting forth in full the steps by which he had reached his position in favor of immersion, and Alexander Campbell spoke at length on the same subject. The entire services lasted for seven hours. At the next meeting of the church, thirteen more people expressed a desire to be immersed. They were accordingly baptized on a simple profession of faith in Jesus Christ.²

This action of the Campbells separated them

¹ “Historical Documents,” p. 115. ² See Tyler’s “History of the Disciples,” p. 62.

more widely from their Presbyterian associates, but naturally drew them closer to the Baptists. Alexander Campbell especially was in great demand as a preacher among the neighboring Baptist congregations, and fraternal feelings were mutually expressed. The outcome of this situation was a union of the Brush Run Church with the Baptist Redstone Association.

4. Union with the Baptists

When overtures for union with the Baptists were first made it was recognized that there were some serious difficulties in the way. The chief of these difficulties was that the Redstone Association adhered to a human creed—the Philadelphia “Confession of Faith”—and the Brush Run Church could not hope to gain much by exchanging one creedal bondage for another. None the less, the points of difference seemed so few that the pacific Thomas Campbell, who lamented deeply the idea of founding “a new church,” was especially willing to effect the union. Peace with his brethren was always the motto of the author of the “Declaration and Address.” Before the union was consummated, however, the Brush Run Church gave explicit expression, “in some eight or ten pages of large dimensions,”¹ to their independence of human creeds and their determination to preach the Scriptures alone.

The Baptists, on their side, were not altogether satisfied with the arrangement. Their dissatisfac-

¹ *Millennial Harbinger*, Series III., Vol. V., p. 346.

tion reached an historic culmination upon the occasion of the delivery of Alexander Campbell's famous "Sermon on the Law," as it is styled, before a meeting of the regular Baptist Association at Cross Creek, Virginia, 1816.

5. The Sermon on the Law

The circumstances attending the delivery of this famous sermon were somewhat peculiar. Originally invited to speak, Mr. Campbell was afterward switched from the program because of certain doubts as to his orthodoxy. The substitute provided for him took suddenly ill, however, and he was called upon almost without warning to take his original place upon the program. Campbell's own account of the situation which resulted is graphic and interesting. He says: "Not having a subject at command, I asked to speak the second discourse. Elder Cox preceded me. At the impulse of the occasion I was induced to draw a clear line between the law and the gospel, the old dispensation and the new, Moses and Christ. This was my theme. No sooner had I got on the way than Elder Pritchard came up into the tent and called out two or three of the preachers to see a lady suddenly taken sick, and thus created much confusion in the audience. I could not understand it. Finally, they got composed and I proceeded. The congregation became much engaged; we all seemed to forget the things around us, and went into the merits of the subject. The result was, during the interval (as I learned long afterward) the overzealous elder called a council of the preachers, and proposed to them

to have me forthwith condemned before the people by a formal declaration from the stand, repudiating my discourse as 'not Baptist doctrine.' One of the elders said: 'Elder Pritchard, I am not yet prepared to say whether it be or be not Bible doctrine; but one thing I can say, were we to make such an annunciation, we would sacrifice ourselves and not Mr. Campbell'."

The text of the sermon was John 1:17: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." It was first written up from the original notes, and published in the *Millennial Harbinger* for 1846. The outline is as follows:

I. We shall endeavor to ascertain what ideas we are to attach to the phrase "*the law*" in this and similar portions of the Scriptures.

II. Point out those things which the law could not accomplish.

III. Demonstrate the reason why the law failed to accomplish these objects.

IV. Illustrate how God has remedied those relative defects of the law.

V. In the last place, deduce such conclusions from these premises as must obviously and necessarily present themselves to every unbiased and reflecting mind.¹

There is scarcely anything in the sermon which would not be accepted to-day by orthodox churches everywhere, but at the time the discourse was delivered, its sentiments were little short of revolu-

¹ "Historical Documents," pp. 224, 225.

tionary. Mr. Campbell, with unusual far-sightedness, put himself in line with the progressive interpretation of the Scriptures which has become such a commonplace in later religious thinking. He pleaded for a proper historical conception of the origin and purpose of the Bible, and denied the absurd but universally accepted impression that all parts of the volume possessed equal authority for Christians, for all future time.

**6. Final Break
with the Baptists**

The "Sermon on the Law" was made the ground of impeachment and trial of its author. Writing thirty years later, Mr. Campbell said that "it was by a great effort on my part that this self-same 'Sermon on the Law' had not proved my public excommunication from the denomination under the brand of 'damnable heresy.' But by a great stretch of charity on the part of two or three old men, I was saved by a decided majority."¹ He added that this sermon involved him in a seven years' war with some members of the Redstone Association. He said also that he might never have advocated the Reformation if he had not been persecuted on account of this discourse. He further said that he did not think there was "a Baptist association on the continent that would now treat me as did the Redstone Association of that day, which is some evidence to my mind that the Baptists are not so stationary as a few of them would have the world believe."²

¹ "Introduction to the Sermon," *Millennial Harbinger*, 1846.

² *Millennial Harbinger*, 1846.

The war thus inaugurated in the Redstone Association continued for several years, and ended in the withdrawal of the Campbells. They never were expelled from the Baptist Church nor from any Baptist association. Finally, however, the situation became so unpleasant that they withdrew from the Redstone and entered the Mahoning Association. In 1827 this association adjourned *sine die*, the majority having reached the conclusion that there is no Scriptural warrant for such organization of churches. Alexander Campbell himself was opposed to the action, as he did not consider the question one involving anything more than expediency. Willingly or otherwise, he and his colaborers from this time on launched upon an independent and almost miraculously successful career.

7. Union with Stone and His Followers We have already traced the progress of the Reformation begun in Kentucky by Barton W. Stone. In 1832, after a somewhat prolonged correspondence between Campbell and Stone, the two movements coalesced in Lexington, Kentucky. There were a few points of minor divergence, but in all essential particulars the ideals of the two leaders were the same. Both began their work as ardent advocates of Christian union. Both accepted the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone, as the only rule of faith and practice. Both believed in immersion as the act of Christian baptism. Both were tolerant and broad in their views upon religious subjects. There was a slight difference in the nomenclature which they

had severally adopted. The followers of Stone adhered to the name "Christian," and "Christian" only. Mr. Campbell preferred the term "Disciple," both because he regarded it as thoroughly Scriptural and also because it gave less offense to others. This difference was, however, at the most, insignificant. They mutually agreed to waive the question of name, and to this day their united followers, in different parts of the country, use the two titles indiscriminately. Neither Stone nor Campbell used any name with a denominational reference, and with this understanding the question became one of comparative indifference. As Mr. Tyler puts the situation: "The friends of Stone did not join Alexander Campbell as their leader, nor did the brethren of Campbell join B. W. Stone, but all, having taken Jesus as their leader, became one body—not Stoneites nor Campbellites, but simply and only Christians, disciples of Christ, saints, brethren, children of God. And why may not similar results be brought about between other peoples?"¹ John Smith, familiarly known as "Raccoon John," put the situation this way: "Let us then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of Lights, but let us all come to the Bible, and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us the light we need."² This has been the position of those who were there united ever since.

¹ "History of the Disciples of Christ," p. 74. ² "Life of Elder John Smith," by Williams, p. 454.

8. Later Progress of the Restora- tion Movement

From the time when the followers of Campbell and Stone joined their forces, the united movement grew with extraordinary rapidity. The sentiment for Christian union was one which found a responsive chord in Christians everywhere, and the appeal for a return to the apostolic Church as the only possible basis for union was one which commanded widespread acceptance. The extraordinary ability of Alexander Campbell, both as writer and orator, contributed not a little to the success of the movement. After founding the *Christian Baptist*, Mr. Campbell finally originated the *Millennial Harbinger*, a monthly journal which enormously increased his influence. Great colleges sprang up, missionary societies were organized and a world-wide propaganda instituted. At first the new movement met with bitter hostility everywhere, all sorts of opprobrious epithets were attached to it and various forms of persecution were applied in different places, but still it lived and grew, and continues to grow to-day. More important by far than its own immediate progress has been the dissemination of its principles among the orthodox religious bodies of Christendom. Denominationalism, which was openly defended everywhere in the days of the Campbells, has lost its hold upon the religious world. Christians of all sects and parties now long, as Campbell longed, for ultimate Christian union. The dominant sentiment of the age is for union, and the signs of the times are all in its favor. The creedal position of Thomas

Campbell is to-day perhaps the dominant creedal position in the minds of thinking Protestants in America, and is sure to command more universal acceptance as time passes on. Christians no longer "bite and devour" each other, and the Kingdom of God is coming the more speedily as this sentiment prevails in the hearts of the followers of the Nazarene, over all the world.

Questions

1. Sketch the life of Thomas Campbell up to the time of his coming to America.
2. Sketch the early career of Alexander Campbell.
3. What was meant by the "Christian Association of Washington, Pennsylvania"?
4. Under what circumstances was the "Declaration and Address" prepared?
5. Sketch briefly the different propositions which it contained.
6. What was the purpose of the "Declaration and Address"?
7. Sketch the character and organization of the Brush Run Church.
8. What led to the immersion of Alexander and Thomas Campbell?
9. What was the effect of their action in this matter?
10. How did the Campbells come to unite with the Baptists?
11. State the circumstances under which the "Sermon on the Law" was preached.
12. Sketch the further relations of the Campbells with the Baptists.
13. Give the history of the union of Campbell's followers with those of Stone.
14. State the further progress of the united movement.
15. How has this movement affected Protestant Christianity in general?

VII

The New Testament Basis of Unity

OUTLINE—CHAPTER VII

- 1. CHRISTIAN CHARACTER THE FIRST ESSENTIAL.**
- 2. THE FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH.**
- 3. CREED.**
- 4. ORDINANCE.**
- 5. POLITY.**

VII

THE NEW TESTAMENT BASIS OF UNITY

1. Christian Character the First Essential

Our study thus far has been almost entirely historical. We have traced the pristine unity of the Church, the rise of Papal ecclesiasticism, the Protestant Reformation, and the beginnings and progress of the movement for Christian unity by restoring the original apostolic Church. It seems proper that at this point we should pause to discuss at greater detail the logical basis upon which the union of all Christians may be consummated. The subject is a large one, but its importance is such as to demand the most careful scrutiny.

In approaching any discussion of the Christian religion, the first essential is a recognition of the fact that the Church as an organization exists solely as a means and never as an end in itself. The goal and purpose of the Church is the production of Christian character. Jesus himself had very little to say about the Church. Only twice in our Gospels does he use the word,¹ and both of these instances occur in the writings of Matthew alone. But Jesus had a great deal to say about the Christian life. His teaching in its entirety

¹ Matt. 16: 17-19; 18: 15-17.

dealt fundamentally with character-building. In his greatest discourse he begins by contrasting the era of forms and ceremonies with the new era of moral purity.¹ Practical maxims and instructions regarding the good life occupy most of his attention. Above all else, he taught by the power of example. The sinlessness of his character made a tremendous impression upon all. Even the Jews, who hated him, when challenged dared not impeach the stainlessness of his life.² Pilate at his trial found no fault in him. Everywhere the moral purity and perfection of Jesus is the outstanding feature of the Gospels.

The supreme Teacher, it is true, had much to say, upon occasion, of the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven. Doubtless these terms may often be identified with the Church ideal, but when this is done it is the spiritual and internal characteristics which are indicated rather than the external or formal. Paul's definition is well stated: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."³ A late writer⁴ says very accurately: "This morality of Jesus was the first note of the Church. The Church was composed of those who had believed in him, were regenerated by him, and, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, were growing like him."⁵

It may be well to briefly analyze the salient characteristics of the moral teachings of Jesus in order

¹ See Matt. 5: 21-37. ² John 8: 46. ³ Rom. 14: 17. ⁴ Rev. R. F. Horton. ⁵ "The Early Church," p. 106.

that the Christian ideal may become perfectly clear. The first note in the new gospel was that of *personal righteousness*. The rich young ruler was told first of all to obey the commandments, and the more important ones were directly designated.¹ In the Sermon on the Mount the moral teaching of the Ten Commandments is directly emphasized and reiterated. Clean living was the first essential in all the preaching of Jesus, as it had been in that of the prophets and of John the Baptist, before him. The chief features of the ideal of personal righteousness, as promulgated by the Master, were first of all *humility*, the corner-stone of his whole ethical teaching.² Later came such cardinal virtues as kindness, honesty, good citizenship, chastity, temperance, truthfulness and industry. Over all was a supreme devotion to duty unsurpassed in the history of human thought or action.³ The ethics of Jesus remain unequalled in all the teaching of the ages.⁴

The moral goal of the great Teacher was not, however, confined to personal purity alone. Perhaps its most striking note was to be found in its social emphasis. To-day we are realizing, as never before since the apostolic age itself, the significance of this message.⁵ Jesus taught, as no other teacher ever taught it, the supreme value of human brotherhood. Love and (as love realized in actual experience)

¹ Mark 10: 19. ² Mark 9: 35, 36. ³ John 4: 34. ⁴ For a complete analysis of the ideal of personal righteousness see the author's "Religion of Christ," Part II., Chap. I. ⁵ See books like the two volumes of Professor Rauschenbusch, "Christianity and the Social Crisis" and "Christianizing the Social Order," and countless others.

service were the pre-eminently outstanding notes in his gospel. He was the most social of all the great teachers of the world. His greatest joy was to serve others, and the highest places in his Kingdom were reserved for those who were willing to do the same.¹ This element of service led, in the early Church, to the finest spirit of brotherhood. As one historian² expresses it: "In antiquity it [the Christian brotherhood] seemed miraculous. By it the world recognized the disciples of Christ. It was an amazing and distinctive quality. In the literature of the first age, especially in the early apologies, it is this divine love of man for man which is pressed as the evidence of Christianity. Christians cared and sacrificed for one another, would die for one another. Christians loved men even their enemies."³

Another characteristic of Christ's ethical teaching was his proclamation of *freedom* for the individual and for the race. In his first sermon at Nazareth he took for his text the fine passage from Isaiah which proclaims among other things the "opening of the prison" and the bursting of the captive's chains.⁴ This freedom was to be physical, intellectual and moral. Christendom has perhaps paid less attention to the Christian ideal of freedom than to any other feature of Christ's teaching. The Roman Catholic Church was not indifferent to the social ideal of Jesus, and, theoretically at least, not to that of personal righteousness, but the ideal of

¹ Mark 10:40-45. ² Horton. ³ "The Early Church," p. 133.

⁴ Luke 4:18.

freedom found small comfort in its borders. To this day no man dare think save as the Church dictates. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," but truth can not reveal herself to a mind bound by the chains of a self-imposed slavery. The ecclesiastical tyranny of the Papacy extends from the external surroundings of its supporters to the inner chambers of the soul, and binds the aspiring intellect in its fetters. To think, thus becomes the crime of all crimes, while slavish obedience is heralded as the supreme virtue.

Dogmatic Protestantism has frequently forged similar chains for its advocates. Our historical study thus far has shown the intolerance of the creeds of many of the Protestant churches. We have seen, also, how this intolerance produced endless schism and constant bitterness and strife. The return to apostolic unity must mean also a return to apostolic freedom.

2. The Function of the Church The first essential for union in Christendom is a spontaneous recognition of the goal of Christianity as consisting fundamentally in the development of a certain type of character. Men who regard religion as a matter of ceremonialism pure and simple, and not a matter of the inner character and life, can never harmonize with those who attach the deeper meaning to the term. The Master made this point perfectly clear in the Sermon on the Mount, and the irreconcilable hostility between the Pharisees and himself arose from the same fundamental divergence. The Pharisee looked on relig-

ion as a mere performing of rites and ceremonies, and were scrupulously exact in their care to observe these formalities. Jesus, on the other hand, taught that the mechanical performance of religious rites possessed no significance for the soul—that it was not the outside of the cup that mattered, but the inside—and his teaching clashed constantly with that of his contemporaries.¹ It seems a strange sort of irony that the Church calling itself after Jesus' name should many times in later history have gone over to his opponents on this very question. Between Jewish ceremonialism and Christian ceremonialism there is not the difference of an iota. If Jesus could not amalgamate the Pharisaical ceremonialism with his own teaching, it is surely too much to expect his followers to amalgamate Christian ceremonialism with the same teaching. Fundamentally, however, Protestant churches, at least, are at one on the significance of character-building as the goal of the Church. Fundamentally, too, they are at one in their definition of what constitutes character. Ethical ideals sometimes vary in different ages, but the ideals of the same age usually show substantial harmony. It is safe to say that few Protestants would take exception to the Christianity of a man who embodied the great ideals of personal righteousness, of social service and of intellectual and moral freedom as outlined in this chapter. There is a spontaneous recognition of goodness as the last word in Christianity on the part of all people,

¹ See Mark 7 and the Sabbath-day controversies so numerous in the New Testament.

and a good man is usually detected without much effort on his own part. He is a hidebound partisan indeed who will not gladly pay homage to Christian goodness wherever it may be found, whether it be Catholic, Greek or Protestant. The Apostle Paul makes the possession of the good life the ultimate test of a Christian. If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his,¹ we are told, and then we are informed that the presence of the Spirit is known by its fruits—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.²

As Horton expresses the idea: "Goodness, therefore, a true goodness, is the note of the Church; a goodness to be maintained by teaching, by discipline, by faith and prayer, by 'provoking one another to good works,' because the saving power of the Church depends on it."³

The Church, then, as an organization was instituted to develop Christian goodness—to help men and women to be like Christ and to grow more like him from day to day. As an end in itself, the Church possesses practically no value and may be productive of infinite harm. Whenever the Church loses its capacity to develop and foster individual and social morality, it has outlived its usefulness and must disappear. It is a sound instinct which has led governments to foster religion and the church organization. The best police force in the universe is the kirk with a godly minister and a

¹ Rom. 8: 9. ² Gal. 5: 22, 23. ³ "The Early Church," p. 124.

faithful congregation. The church was intended to be the bulwark of morality, and, despite repeated perversions and failures, it has, in the main, been true to its mission.

Recognizing the proper place and function of the Church organization as the means and not as the end, we come now to a more detailed analysis of the Church of Christ itself.

3. Creed

The first thing to be noticed in attempting to analyze the complex idea involved in the word "church" is the question of creed; that is, the standard of belief for those who are to become members. Thought always precedes voluntary or intelligent action, and the thought basis is therefore the first to be considered.

In our sketch of the early Church we called attention to the primitive confession demanded of those who wished to become its members. This confession was a simple acknowledgment of Jesus as the Son of God and as their Lord and Saviour.¹ As a single formula it is perhaps best expressed in the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."² There is no evidence that any other creedal statement was used or approved as a basis for church membership in the New Testament age.

As we have seen in our rapid *resume* of church history, departures from this simple apostolic creed have universally led to divisions. The idea has

¹ Acts 16: 31; also Rom. 10: 9, 10. ² Matt. 16: 16.

been always to unify by clearer definition, but the result has been always to exclude and to divide. The reason for this result is simple enough. Creeds are for the most part theological statements. Theology is a matter of thought, and thought is essentially progressive. Hence the thought of a past age becomes outworn and intolerable to the age succeeding. For this reason we have the constant necessity for creedal revision on the part of those who adhere to the dogmatic standards. The only possible universal creed must be one which allows room for thought to expand and to develop from age to age. The only creed that has ever accomplished this perfectly has been the original apostolic creed. There is such breadth about the confession of Peter that as long as Christianity lives it can never be outgrown. In order that there may be Christianity at all, men must accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, as their ideal and guide. This, and this alone, the apostolic confession demands. Less than this, one can not believe and be a Christian at all. More than this, one need not believe in order to wear the name of Jesus.

Human creeds have clearly proven divisive. The Church was one originally when it knew only the divine creed. Surely the only rational and certain basis for creedal harmony is to return to the apostolic order. The acceptance of this creed does not prevent a man from accepting and believing whatever theology he pleases. He may be a Calvinist or an Arminian, a sacramentarian or a liberal, but if he accepts Jesus with his whole heart as his Lord

and Saviour, he is a Christian in addition to, or in despite of, whatever else he may be. Here is common ground in the matter of creed, and nowhere else is it possible to find common ground. Perhaps most Christians would assent to the dogmas contained in the so-called Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, and yet without strained interpretation there are passages in both of these creeds which would exclude sincere followers of the Master.

It is noteworthy that this apostolic confession is becoming more and more the real standard of faith with Christians. In many Protestant churches to-day, members are received without making any other profession. The creeds are kept strictly for the ministers to adhere to, and the ministers interpret them very liberally. It is a peculiar fact that religious customs and ideas are almost never driven out of existence by controversy. They simply "wear out"; that is, become disused and unnecessary, and hence disappear. Dogmatic creeds are rapidly pursuing this pathway to-day, and thus the road is being opened for the acceptance of that broad primitive and apostolic confession which can alone unify the Christian world. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America accepts as constituent members churches which recognize "Jesus as their divine Lord and Saviour." What the Council recognizes as the only necessary standard for churches to accept in order to be styled Christian, must soon come to be the only standard required of the individuals who make up the churches.

The only possible creedal basis for a united Christendom may therefore be found in the confession of Peter—that rock upon which the Church was to be built and against which the gates of Hades should not prevail.

4. Ordinance As creed deals with the matter of thought or belief, so ordinance has to do with action and deed. What one must believe in order to be a Christian is embodied in the creed. What formal actions one must perform come under the head of ordinance. Protestant Christianity to-day is a unit as regards the number of Christian ordinances. The most severe scrutiny can detect no more than two in the New Testament, the ordinances of baptism and of the Lord's Supper. In regard to the general definition of these ordinances there is also substantial agreement. All Protestants accept baptism as the initiatory ordinance and the Lord's Supper as the rite to be observed perpetually by Christians.

The divisions upon the question of baptism have been accentuated by partisan strife, or they might long since have disappeared. Fundamentally there is agreement now upon the two chiefly disputed points—the subjects and actions of the ordinance. As to the subjects, all Christians are agreed that adults coming into the Church should be baptized, some Christians disagree in regard to the acceptance of infants, but there is common ground for the baptism of adults. Moreover, it is easy to find direct Scriptural authority for adult baptism; it is not easy to find the same authority for infant

baptism. Our position here does not demand any argument upon the merits of the question itself. All that we care to do is to show that all Christians to-day stand upon common ground in the matter of the subjects of baptism, that common ground being the recognition of the necessity for adults to be baptized. Some churches demand more than this, but no church demands less; it is therefore a position common to Protestant Christendom. The action of baptism presents a similar situation. All Christians, with practically no exceptions, will accept immersion as the act of baptism. Some Christians will also accept affusion. We have thus two positions occupied in the Protestant world. One accepts immersion and affusion; one accepts immersion alone. Obviously the common ground here is immersion.¹

The Lord's Supper presents few points of divergence among Protestant Christians. Substantially all partake of it in the same way, use the same elements and practice much the same ritual. In the matter of the time and frequency of observance there is some variation. Some churches observe it every Sunday, some monthly, some quarterly. Here, however, there is also common ground. If the table be spread every Sunday, those who prefer to abstain may do so. As the significant embodiment of the spirit of brotherhood, the eucharist appears to have been the central feature of the worship of the early Church. The

¹ See the author's work entitled "Christian Baptism," Chaps. V., VI. and VII.

bread which the Lord broke and divided among the disciples, calling it his body, symbolized the brotherhood. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (1 Cor. 12:27). When the selfish members of the church at Corinth turned the Lord's Supper into their own supper (1 Cor. 11:20, 21), they lost all sense of "the body."¹

As baptism, the first Christian ordinance, symbolizes the first great ideal of Jesus—the turning away from the life of sin and the entering upon the life of personal righteousness—so the Lord's Supper symbolizes the second great ideal—the ideal of brotherhood, the great social goal of Christianity. The function of these two formal rites is obviously to keep alive in the hearts of Christians the great ideals of their Master.

However we may interpret the ordinances, and this is fundamentally a matter of the individual conscience and judgment, the fact remains that they present common ground, New Testament ground, accepted by all Christians and thus furnishing a substantial basis for Christian union.

5. Polity

What men must believe, what they must do, and how they are to be governed—these three things cover the whole field of church operation. We have discussed the first under the head of creed, the second under the

¹ "The Early Church," p. 149.

head of ordinance; there remains the third, the question of polity.

In many respects it must be acknowledged that this is the most difficult subject with which we have to deal from the point of view of Christian union.

There are three polities in operation in the Christian world to-day—the episcopalian, the presbyterian and the congregational. All three claim at least to be based upon the Scriptures, and it is hard to find definite common ground in them. Doubtless personal bias enters into any discussion of the subject, and it is very hard to rid one's self of the personal or ancestral element. One thing seems reasonably clear, and that is the fact that whatever polity may ultimately become universal in the Christian world, it must be a polity which guarantees freedom to the individual Christian. The days of tyranny are over in either church or state. The trend of modern government is increasingly toward democracy, and this trend is becoming stronger as the years pass on. The three polities just mentioned represent the monarchical, oligarchical and democratic ideals of government respectively. It is hard to see how the Christian world at large can be ultimately brought together under any save some form of the democratic ideal. This is not saying that modern congregationalism has entirely solved the problem, but it is saying that the congregational ideal, as such, is in line with the historical trend of government. The original schism of the Reformation was necessitated as much by the monarchical despotism assumed by the

Church of Rome as it was by any other consideration. When the Church becomes haughty and lords it over the body of Christ, the whole number of the elect, then there will and must be schism in the Israel of Christianity. The warning of history is unmistakable at this point. There can be no Christian union which does not guarantee freedom and autonomy to the individual Christian.

The testimony of history coincides strangely with the apostolic records. It is true that there is no command—no positive statement—laid down in the New Testament with regard to polity. There is a definite statement of the apostolic creed. There is also a definite statement of the apostolic ordinances. The government of the early churches is not so clear. None the less, it is perfectly evident that in the apostolic age the individual Christian possessed the largest measure of freedom. Even the Apostles, pre-eminent as they were because of their personal acquaintance with Jesus and because of their possession of miraculous powers, never presumed to lord it over their brethren. When the first selection of new officers was made in the church at Jerusalem, the whole body of disciples selected the *personnel*¹ of those chosen.¹ Paul appears to have exercised considerable authority over the churches which he founded, but it was the authority of influence and ability and not the authority of a despot.² As for Peter, there is nothing in the New Testament to show that he ruled in any

¹ Acts 6: 3. ² Rom. 12: 1; 2 Cor. 10: 1, 2.

way over the primitive Church. In the council at Jerusalem he does not seem to have even possessed the commanding voice.¹ Considering the prevalence of the monarchical idea in the political world, it is one of the most extraordinary facts of religious history that the primitive Christians should have been permitted such complete freedom. When the Church forgot this New Testament ideal, and little by little grew into an absolutism, the days of her decadence were at hand.

Fundamentally, as we have already seen, the moral ideal of the Christian religion involves freedom. Any form of government which destroys this ideal must prove fatal to Christianity in the long run. It would not be possible to unite Christians to-day on any polity which does not guarantee individual liberty. The testimony of history, the voice of Scripture and the experience of present-day political institutions are at one on this point. The free and somewhat loosely organized polity of the New Testament—the simple authority of the congregational brotherhood—remains as the most satisfactory and hopeful solution for the problem of polity. It is interesting to note that Luther himself had caught this point of view. The most eminent church historian of the present day, himself a Lutheran, says: "In spite of the high esteem in which Luther had always held civic authority and the state, his original intention was to reconstruct the Church on the simple basis of govern-

¹ Acts 15: 13, 22.

ment by the congregation. He had visions of a congregational life founded upon fellowship and on principles of Christian liberty, fraternity and equality."¹

Luther's vision has been borne out by later history. Even in monarchical churches the tendency is increasingly toward democracy. Among democratic churches there is no disposition to return to monarchy. The signs of the times point to a return to the primitive simplicity of the apostolic government on the part of all Christians. If this is done, the perplexing problem of polity will be solved and the greatest conscientious hindrance to Christian union will disappear.

¹ Harnack, "Essays on the Social Gospel," p. 51.

Questions

1. What is the first essential of the Christian religion?
2. What is the function of the Church in Christianity?
3. What is meant by the terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of heaven"?
4. Give a brief outline of the moral teachings of Jesus.
5. Outline carefully the ideal of personal righteousness.
6. What emphasis did Jesus lay upon the element of service?
7. What place does Christianity give to the ideal of freedom?
8. How did the Church of the Middle Ages reverse the teaching of Jesus?
9. What relation does the Church sustain to morality?
10. Analyze carefully the creed of Christ's Church.
11. In what sense are human creeds divisive?
12. What is the testimony of the Federal Council in regard to creeds?
13. Define "ordinance."
14. How has the question of ordinance affected the union of Christendom?
15. What common ground do Christians possess with regard to the ordinance of baptism? What about the Lord's Supper?
16. What is meant by "polity"?

VIII

Hindrances to Unity

OUTLINE—CHAPTER VIII

1. INTRODUCTION.
2. IGNORANCE OF THE BELIEFS OF OTHER COMMUNIONS.
3. INHERITED PREJUDICES.
4. NATIONAL AND RACIAL DIVISIONS.
5. POLEMICAL BITTERNESS.
6. PARTY ORGANIZATION AND DENOMINATION-AL PRIDE.
7. MONEYED INTERESTS.
8. PERSONAL AMBITION.
9. LACK OF STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.
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11. CONSCIENTIOUS CONVICTIONS.

VIII

HINDRANCES TO UNITY

I. Introduction

We have discussed thus far the historical features associated with the problem of Christian unity. We have attempted to find common ground for the reunion of all Christians, this common ground being also, as we have discovered, the Scriptural basis of Christianity. There remains, at this juncture, the question as to what hindrances stand in the way of fulfilling the ardent intercessory prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall not presume to furnish any sort of encyclopedic analysis of these hindrances. Fundamentally the vast majority of them belong to the general category which includes all of Satan's work in the world. Dissension is the greatest present-day obstacle to the success of Christianity, and, as a rule, the motives which keep it alive are altogether unworthy. Were it possible to get rid of the sinful element, the really conscientious differences would speedily disappear. The spirit of love and forbearance is fundamental to Christ's Church, and it would soon dispose of the difficulties which may be classed as in any sense worthy, did it once have an opportunity to accomplish its mission. Moreover, while men's opinions will always differ, truth itself is the same, and this

universal characteristic applies to the Christian religion as well as to everything else.

The first hindrance which we wish to mention may be stated as follows:

**2. Ignorance of
the Beliefs of
Other
Communities**

It is astonishing how little Christians of different parties and denominations know of each other. Most of them go exclusively to their own churches, read their own denominational newspapers, and make no effort to honestly understand the religious positions of their neighbors. What information they secure is usually inaccurate and colored by prejudice to an extraordinary degree. There is a sort of Chinese wall built around each denomination, and every attempt to break it down is met with hostility and suspicion. Were people to honestly try to discover and understand the positions occupied by others in the religious world, much of the bitterness and discord prevalent in Christendom would disappear. The penalty for this ignorance and prejudice is visited upon both the individuals themselves and Christianity at large. To believe and cling to a falsehood always carries with it its own punishment. That punishment is written large in the narrow minds, the distorted perspective, the crabbed and embittered dispositions of so many professing Christians. The remedy for this situation is to be found in increased knowledge, the exercise of the open mind, the honest desire to secure and appropriate truth wherever it may be discovered.

One of the finest contributions to a better

mutual understanding among Christians is now being made by the Protestant Episcopal Unity Foundation. It is engaged in publishing and distributing, throughout Christendom, brief and absolutely impartial statements of the positions occupied by different Christian communions. These brief summaries have thus far fulfilled all of the requirements which characterize a genuinely scientific inquiry, and have been of incalculable service to the cause of Christian union. The study of the Restoration movement could not have been more fairly or accurately presented, and the same thing is true of the analysis of the doctrines and positions of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Other studies will doubtless appear from time to time, and thus Christians at large will have an opportunity to read and become familiar with the real positions occupied by their religious neighbors.

It would be profitable if the denominational journals of Christendom could secure a more universally broad point of view, and, instead of emphasizing differences, occasionally magnify points of harmony and agreement. In any event, the essential thing is for everybody to get at the facts. The truth will make its way when it is once known. The only way to defeat it is by covering it over and obscuring it, so that it is impossible to recognize its characteristic and genuine features.

3. **Inherited Prejudices** Next to ignorance the greatest foe of truth is prejudice. Especially is this the case when the prejudice is a matter of inheritance and long-

standing tradition. Such impressions become bred in the bone as it were, and are fearfully hard to remove. Most of people are where they are religiously because their fathers occupied the same position. Some years ago there was a series of studies published under the general caption, "Why I Am a Methodist," "Why I Am a Baptist," etc. One of the writers of the dozen or more churches represented began his article by frankly acknowledging that he belonged where he did religiously because his parents had occupied the same position. No one would undervalue the significance and worth of ancestral inheritances. Neither would we discount the value of obedience to the instruction of parents—religious or otherwise—but it is perfectly clear that if progress is ever to result, it must come from an open examination of evidence independent of what our fathers may have believed. New revelations of truth are constantly appearing, to say nothing of the fact that our fathers had no guarantee of their own infallibility. Every man, in the last analysis, must be judged for himself. His success or failure, in time and eternity, depends upon his convictions and ideals. It becomes, therefore, of prime importance that he should seek for truth with an unbiased mind and an open heart. Nowhere is this more noticeable than it is in religion. Had our own fathers followed blindly their ancestral prejudice, the Dark Ages, religiously speaking, would still be upon us. As their willingness to examine evidence upon its own merits brought about the Reformation, so our willingness

to do the same thing will in large measure usher in the brighter day of universal Christian union. The prayer of every Christian should be: "Lord, give unto me the open mind, the receptive heart, the willingness to seek the truth, and, having found it, the grace and the courage to make it my own!"

4. National and Racial Divisions

What ancestral prejudice is to the individual, racial prejudice is to the group. There are great religious schisms which have been based fundamentally on provincialism. Different races take naturally to different types of thought and action. The Latin mind has its own prejudices, and the Anglo-Saxon mind has its own antipathies. It is not probable that these prejudices and antipathies can ever be overcome entirely. It will take a long period of fusion before Occidental and Oriental, Jew and Gentile, African and American, will be able to divest themselves of their temperamental religious prejudices. Nevertheless, Christianity makes its appeal as a universal religion. In its early progress it broke down racial and national barriers far more inveterate than are those which exist to-day. Its first battle was with the inherited prejudices, both racial and religious, of the Jew, and no nation has ever clung to ancestral lines of demarcation more stubbornly than have the children of Abraham. In the same way it leveled the wall between the Greek and the Barbarian, the stubborn antipathy of universal class distinctions of society and sex, with the truly marvelous proclamation: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free,

there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."¹

The early Church presented the picture of a great brotherhood. Where the spirit of the early Church prevails, the same results will flow to-day. Our racial and national prejudices are not insurmountable. They need only the solvent of Christian love to break them down. Christianity provides full freedom for those diversities of taste and training which characterize the different peoples of the earth. These diversities may even enrich our common religion.² They must never, however, be allowed to stand in the way of that harmony of action and purpose which are so essential for Christian progress. It is noteworthy that where racial differences would seem to be naturally the greatest problem—that is, upon the foreign field—they are in reality the least. One must reach the conclusion that the reason for this is because there is more Christianity on the foreign field. Where there is little religion, minor prejudices will prove serious obstacles, but where there is much religion, even serious difficulties will be brushed away.

5. Polemical Bitterness The polemical bitterness of Christian leaders would seem to be a prime factor in keeping the rank and file of Christendom apart. People never get quite so bitter about any other thing as they do about religion. The meanest things that have been uttered in the history of debate have been ex-

¹ Gal. 3: 28. ² See "The Place of Provincialism in Any Scheme of Church Union," *Christian Union Quarterly*, October, 1913.

pressed by theologians. Moreover, these mean things have been usually untrue. Even Luther and Zwingli could not debate without the former flying into a passion and using harsh language. Had that debate ended differently, the history of Protestantism would have been vastly different. Calvin could not argue with Servetus, and therefore countenanced, at least, his being burned at the stake. The history of religious persecution from the Inquisition down to the present time is filled with the double-distilled essence of polemical hatred. The strange thing about it all is that there is not the slightest countenance for any such procedure in the life or teaching of Christ. The latter, it is true, did use pretty severe language in his denunciation of the hypocritical extortioners of his day, but he never anathematized people of different religious convictions. The Apostle Paul had a high temper and doubtless the full Jewish modicum of polemical fire, and yet he knew how to differ with a brother in a brotherly way.

It is not the fact of difference to which we are referring here, it may be said; it is rather the way in which we differ. For that flabbiness of disposition which bends hither and thither before every wind of doctrine we have small respect. It is of the essence of religious independence that men should differ, but there is no reason why they should not differ in a Christianlike way.

Polemical warfare, of the ungracious type, eventually brings its own condemnation. It is impossible for it to conquer in the end, but its in-

fluence is destructive while it lasts. It is gratifying to note that this evil is becoming rarer and rarer in the religious world. A hundred years ago, when Thomas Campbell wrote the "Declaration and Address," it was the usual order of the day. There was nothing too maliciously unfair for one religious antagonist to say about another. The early history of the Restoration movement is filled with this sort of persecution. Even to this day, in certain sections, slanderous and prejudiced statements are circulated by ostensibly religious people in regard to their religious opponents.

To argue does not mean to battle. To differ does not mean to excommunicate. To criticize, even, does not mean to slander or to misrepresent. When Christendom is purged of this unchristianly polemical attitude, the dawn of union will be at hand. It is noteworthy that the Restoration movement began with the most gentle attitude imaginable toward all Christians. Let any one who doubts this statement read the "Declaration and Address" again. Thomas Campbell was one of the most pacific characters in religious history. Slander and misrepresentation only helped the Campbells in their work, and in the end these vices will not seriously retard the cause of ultimate Christian union.

6. Party Organization and Denominational Pride

The organization of separate denominations and the feelings of loyalty and pride which naturally cluster around such bodies have played no small part in making the problem of Christian union a difficult

one. Loyalty is one of the finest virtues in the world, and surely it is nowhere more needed or more valuable than it is when applied to religion. One who is not loyal to his faith can scarcely be expected to be loyal to anything else. It becomes, therefore, exceedingly unfortunate when the really beautiful principle of loyalty is so badly placed that it means disloyalty to the Church universal. A man can easily be so loyal to his denomination as to become a stumbling-block in the way of the universal progress of Christianity. The older and more venerable a church may be, the greater is the temptation to denominational pride. Historic ancestors and traditions, legends interwoven with bits of poetry and song, thrilling adventures wrought in behalf of the old faith, all help to keep up the party spirit and the party homage. In view of these things, it is really astonishing that there is as much open-mindedness as one often finds among the adherents of the ancient creeds. It requires a fine type of mind to be able to rise above mere denominational loyalty to the larger devotion to Christianity as a whole.

It is a helpful sign of the times that denominationalism *per se* is rapidly disappearing. When the Restoration movement began, the loyalty to party names and creeds was something difficult for us in these latter days to understand. Few people had any vision of the Church as a whole; they were content to cling to their own provincial type of religion, and in many instances desired nothing beyond. It seems strange that the great universal

sweep of Christianity should have made so little appeal to them. Occasionally even to-day, in certain provincial sections as a rule, voices are raised in defense of the denomination as opposed to the Church universal, but such voices are becoming rarer and rarer. At a meeting of representatives of the Federal Council a year or two ago, one of the most venerable members present, a man who has occupied the highest place of honor in his own denomination and who has a lifelong record for his denominational loyalty, said with deep earnestness: "Brethren, when I am at home I am a — through and through, but when I am here I am a Christian, and nothing more." This conception of loyalty to the Church universal is gradually taking the place of denominational loyalty in most Protestant churches. Wherever this is not true the denominational spirit stands in the way of Christian union.

7. Moneyed Interests Milton styled Mammon the "least erected" spirit that fell from heaven, and, as a rule, wherever there is anything seriously wrong in the Church, the slimy hand of Greed will be discovered at work. Jesus declared flatly that "ye cannot serve God and mammon," and much of his life was devoted to showing the danger and folly of trusting in riches. The Apostle Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, styles the love of money a root of all evil, while the Apostle James inveighs vigorously against the dangerous influence of money in the Church. These warnings of the olden times were not exaggerated. The one thing that is probably keeping

Christians in America apart to-day more than anything else is business interests. Business interests—collecting money for St. Peter's through Tetzels—started the Reformation. "Big business" has its clerical as well as its commercial side. Denominations grow and become wealthy. They invest church funds in publishing-houses and strictly denominational plants of various kinds. The management of these plants falls into the hands of people who have both a personal and a denominational interest in keeping them up. The consequences which must result from this situation are easy to foresee. It is almost morally impossible, for the average man, at least, to dissociate his personal interests combined with the feeling of denominational loyalty which has been probably strongly developed in him, from what he conceives to be his duty. Hence the strongest advocates of denominationalism are to be found clustered around publishing-houses and central bureaus of the various churches. These brethren would feel aggrieved if they were told that their denominational loyalty has a basis similar to that of Demetrius of Ephesus, who feared for his craft if Christ prevailed over Diana, and yet there is certainly a similar element present in it. It has been openly asserted, and never denied so far as we know, that great publishing interests helped to break up the unanimity of the Christian Endeavor propaganda in years gone by. With the collapse of denominationalism and the coming of Christian union there would doubtless be some necessary readjustments in vested interests, and yet the fear that there

would be any real loss is absolutely groundless. The only loss that could result would be to those who create a market for their wares by playing upon party bias and prejudice in their adherents. Christian union would, of course, destroy this fictitious market, but surely the Christian world would be infinitely better off as a result of such destruction.

The complex machinery which obtains in many Protestant denominations might disappear with the coming of Christian unity. This would cause loss of position to some. The opportunities for effective service would be multiplied, however, and no soldier under the old *regime* could find his services unneeded under the new.

8. Personal Ambition

The element of personal ambition has undoubtedly helped to retard Christian union. Doubtless it has been often present unconsciously, but it is so universal and persistent in human life that its presence in the Church is well-nigh unavoidable. Much partisan strife results from it, and much harm has been done to the cause of Christianity. It has been the crying curse of hierarchies, and church history has been filled with examples of its deleterious influence. The ambitions and jealousies of great churchmen have wrought havoc in the past, and while the sin is doubtless far less prevalent to-day, it is by no means a negligible quantity. If all denominational leaders could sink personal ambitions of every sort out of sight, the glad day of union would be near at hand. When we recall that two of the greatest among the Twelve possessed this

false ambition, and were rebuked for it by their Master, only a short while before his Passion, we can realize how ingrained is the temptation which the desire for position presents. The only remedy for the situation is a closer walk with God, a fuller realization of the real mission of religion, and a deeper consciousness of the unworthiness of all human vainglory and pride. It is worthy of note, on the optimistic side, that Christendom to-day presents numerous examples in every denomination of men who are willing to sacrifice all thoughts of self in the higher glory of service to the Kingdom of God. These men are becoming more numerous every year, and their influence is helping to swell the tide in favor of Christian unity.

9. Lack of Study of the Scriptures Consistent and earnest study of the Bible almost invariably leads to a decided passion for Christian union. It was thus that Barton Stone and the Campbells caught their vision of the subject, and it is thus that men and women to-day are coming to catch the same vision. The only possible solution for the present divisions in Christendom, as Thomas Campbell clearly saw, is to go back to the primitive apostolic model and restore the original catholic and apostolic Church. Now, this Church can not be apprehended save through the Scriptures, so that unfamiliarity with the Bible means unfamiliarity not only with the desire of Christ for union on the part of his followers, but also unfamiliarity with the only means by which union can be secured and maintained. One of the most hope-

ful indications for the future is the renewed interest in Bible study which exists everywhere in Christendom to-day.

In the older times people got their religious information largely at second-hand—through catechisms, polemical treatises, tracts and the like. Nowadays they go direct to the Bible for it, and the results are infinitely more salutary from the point of view of Christian unity. It is hard to understand how a man can read John 17 understandingly and then work up enthusiasm for denominationalism. "That they all may be *one*" is an appeal peculiarly adapted to touch the heart of the genuine Christian.

Careful reading of the Scriptures tends also to disclose the germs of Church divisions in the apostolic age, and shows how such divisions were regarded by the Apostles. Paul's famous reference to the schisms which were beginning to rend the peace of the Corinthian church find apt illustration in the Christian world to-day. A thoughtful and devout Christian reading such passages can not but feel impressed with the wrong of Church divisions, and can not but experience an earnest desire to see them disappear.

The Bible is the best text-book on Christian union. Its earnest and intelligent study by all Christians would soon bring about the realization of the intercessory prayer of our Lord.

<p>10. Lack of Prayer</p>	<p>Christian union will not come finally as a result of logical discussion. No "unions" come that way. Union is a matter of feeling, of sympathy, of</p>
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genuine affection. It was a true note sounded by the Protestant Episcopal Foundation when it called upon all Christians everywhere to pray for union. Prayer helps to humble the soul, to drive out petty ambitions and low personal jealousies. It puts us in tune with the Infinite, and helps us to hear the voice of God speaking above the brazen clangor of this world of time and sense. Christ prayed for union in the first place, and when his followers learn to pray as he prayed, union will come. Only through prayer can we ever hope to possess that grace which will enable us to sink our little prejudices and desires in the interest of the larger Church to be and of the universal Kingdom of God.

**II. Conscientious
Convictions**

We have left to the last the one reason which is usually put first by opponents of union. We have done this advisedly, for we have always believed that if the unworthy reasons for disunion can be eliminated, the worthy ones will be seen to have disappeared also. One ground for believing this consists in the fact that Protestants have usually divided, and split up into fragments, over questions of trivial importance.

The question of baptism may serve as a convenient illustration. It is frequently asserted that divergent views with regard to baptism constitute the chief reasons for keeping Christians apart. A cursory analysis of the facts will show how mistaken is this impression. Pædobaptist churches are as far from each other as individual communions among them are from the Baptist churches. On the other

hand, Baptist churches are as widely separated among themselves as are the pædobaptist. In the South, frequently immersionist churches have more fraternal relations with their pædobaptist brethren than they have with their Baptist brethren. Nothing is clearer, therefore, than the fact that conscientious views upon baptism are not what is dividing the Church to-day. So long as Baptists fight each other, and pædobaptists fly apart, there must be some other reason than baptism for the schism in the body of Christ.

The same logic will apply to our conscientious convictions in other particulars. As we have shown in our study thus far, there is abundant common ground, offensive to no Christian's convictions, for a united Church of Christ. Why, then, has the united Church failed to appear? We allow Peter Ainslie to answer this question:

"The greatest hindrance to union to-day is ungodliness in the Church in the form of bigotry, sectarianism, pride, meanness, history and self-righteousness. Upon these issues divisions have come, and until these are scourged out of the portals of the Church, union is impossible. There is not a communion in Christendom that is not infected with this disease, some in one form, and some in another, but in all there is an element of ungodliness that will poison the whole Church if it is not cured. The hope of victory is that in all communions there are some that are uncompromisingly fighting this evil, and they are fighting it with the heroism of soldiers on the field of battle. Scriptural

texts are frequently used to hide the hypocrisy of sectarianism, but its ungodliness has beneath it deception and deadly germs that spread discontent and bigotry wherever they go. The call from Christ to the Church is: "Remember whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come to thee, and will remove the candlestick out of its place, except thou repent."¹

¹ "Is Not Baptism the Greatest Barrier to Union?" (Peter Ainslie in the *Christian Union Quarterly*, October, 1913).

Questions

1. To what general class do the chief hindrances to Christian union belong?

2. How does ignorance of the beliefs of other churches affect the situation?

3. What work is now being done by the Protestant Episcopal Unity Foundation in the matter of furnishing accurate religious information?

4. In what way does prejudice affect the question of union?

5. How do national and racial divisions hinder union?

6. What was the attitude of the Church toward racial differences in apostolic times?

7. What examples of polemical bitterness does religion furnish?

8. How does denominational pride affect the situation?

9. How is the principle of loyalty in religious matters often misunderstood?

10. How have moneyed interests affected the problem of Christian union?

11. What can you say of the element of personal ambition?

12. How has a failure to study the Scriptures affected the situation?

13. What is the best text-book on Christian union?

14. What part does prayer play in the consideration of Church union?

IX

The Profitableness of a United Church

OUTLINE—CHAPTER IX

1. THE PROBLEM OF OVERCHURCHING.
2. THE PROBLEM OF UNDERCHURCHING.
3. THE COUNTRY CHURCH.
4. DUPLICATION OF ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES.
5. DUPLICATION IN EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENTS.
6. EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN UNION ON THE BUSINESS WORLD.
7. EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN UNION UPON SOCIETY AT LARGE.
8. EFFECT OF CHRISTIAN UNION UPON CHRISTIANS THEMSELVES.
9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

IX

THE PROFITABLENESS OF A UNITED CHURCH

I. The Problem of Overchuraching

The economic aspects of the Christian union problem are concededly of less importance than other considerations. Were Christian union wrong, or should it violate the consciences of Christians, no matter how great the economic waste of division, division would be fully justified. Conscience is worth more than money, and especially is this true in the field of religion. When, however, Christian union is concededly right, and should cause no violation whatever of any Christian's conscience, then the question of economic waste becomes a matter worthy of serious attention.

The problem of overchuraching is one which has always disturbed the minds of Christians and afforded much opportunity for ridicule to unbelievers. It is purely a problem of the divided Church. In the united Church it could have no place.

A typical illustration would be the following: X—— is a small town (this is a real case) of about eight hundred population. It has a Roman Catholic church, a Protestant Episcopal church, a Lutheran church, a German Reformed church, three Methodist churches of different brands, and several families

trying to start other churches. With possibly one exception, all of these churches are supported by boards of their respective denominations. In three, at least, of the churches services are held only once or twice a month. All of the congregations have separate buildings, most of them with debts upon them. The ministers are poorly paid and the preaching is of poor quality. There is constant rivalry going on, and each church is interested in securing every new settler who enters the village. There is occasional proselyting, and a good many people in the place do not go to church at all. The town could support one good church, or at the most two; could keep the buildings in good repair and free from debt; could pay competent ministers and relieve the various boards of the burden they are now carrying. Moreover, the church could enter into a vigorous campaign for civic betterment which would command the support of all good citizens. Under the present *regime* the church life of the community is at a low ebb, there is ruinous economic waste, and the cause of Christianity is being constantly brought into disrepute.

With Christian union the religious problem of X—— would be easily solved. Under denominationalism there appears to be no solution.

X—— is a typical case, and yet, as the records of the Home Boards of all churches will show, there are others even worse. The boards themselves are not to blame. They can not afford to refuse the petitions of their adherents for help in building up churches where they may worship according to

the dictates of their denominational consciences. Many of the boards would like to solve the problem otherwise, but under the present *regime* they are helpless. Christian union is the only ultimate and feasible solution of the whole question.

While small villages like X——
2. The Problem of Underchurching and many larger places are over-churched, there are other places, and this is especially true of the large cities, which are underchurched. Some sections do not have one church for many thousands of population. Three reasons may be assigned for this situation. First, the population is often largely foreign, and what interest most of the individuals possessed in religion was dissipated in breaking the home ties to come to America. Second, the divisions in the Church have made its appeal weak and puerile to many who might otherwise accept Christianity, and, third, the separate boards are kept so busy maintaining denominational churches where they are not needed that they have slender resources to cope with the gigantic problems of city evangelization.

Our cities are now teeming with uncounted multitudes who have no religious faith whatever. Many of them are anarchists in regard to both government and religion. Morality makes no appeal to them except on the most utilitarian basis. Their children are growing up in crime, in many instances. Here is a great field for the immediate attention of the Church. But the Church is impotent and helpless because of her divisions. So important has the problem become that in most large cities the Prot-

estant churches are "federated" to fight the common foe. But federation is at best a poor apology for union. Both internally and externally it is a rope of sand. Internally it lacks the cohesive force and dynamic which union would possess, and externally it presents a pitiable picture of apology for the eyes of skeptical spectators. Federalism is a step in the right direction. It means better acquaintance, better knowledge and a disappearance of prejudice. As a final solution of the union problem, however—and we are speaking here, of course, with especial reference to the underchurched masses—it is utterly futile. With our great city problems looming up before us more alarmingly every year, it would seem that the appeal of the underchurched, who are underchurched because of our pitiable divisions, should inspire all true Christians with a passion for Christian union.

3. The Country Church

The problem of the rural church is now attracting widespread attention. The tremendous movement cityward in the last half-century has had a pronounced effect upon rural congregations. A typical case may be cited. Y—— is a country church supported by farmers who accept its traditional belief, at least for the most part, and attend its services with more or less regularity. The expense attached to the upkeep of the church falls chiefly upon a little coterie of leading men who are directly interested. By and by one of these leading men sells out and goes to the city. The burden falls upon those who are left, and so the process

goes on until the congregation is unable to support a minister, the church doors are closed, and soon the building itself falls to ruin. This picture is a true history of thousands of rural churches in America during the past two decades. What is especially significant in the picture is that Y—— is surrounded by other churches of various denominations in which the same process is going on. Because the community can not support all of these rural denominational churches, it is not permitted to have the benefit of one of them. The united church could easily solve this problem by building churches only where they are needed and supporting them where missionary work is necessary. As a matter of fact, however, there is scarcely a rural community in America which, if it were properly churched, would need a penny from any Home Board to keep it alive and in a position to serve the community. As it is, we raise money from churches which have something over, and at great cost for machinery and manipulation, through a multiplicity of separate boards, disburse this money in communities which are overchurched already, in order to keep our denominational congregations even barely alive. This stupendous waste does not even maintain one good, active church in the majority of communities. It does barely sustain life in a dozen struggling congregations, but there is not one of them that has red blood enough to be of any real service to the community at large. Is there difference enough between our respective "creeds" to justify this really awful waste in the vital power of

the Church? Fundamentally, the Church is nothing more than a means to an end. The end is a Christ-like soul for the individual and for society. In this one problem of overchurching, with its consequent evils, are not all Protestant Christians sacrificing the end for the means? Of all stupid institutions, the modern Church must, to an outsider, appear the most perennially and indefensibly stupid, since it is constantly sacrificing the higher in the interest of the lower and the end for the means.

4. **Duplication of Organized Activities** All Protestant bodies maintain certain forms of organized work. It is pretty universally recognized that the Church can not function properly without definite organization for specific purposes. Missionary and benevolent activities are best carried on in this way, and can, in fact, be satisfactorily carried on after no other fashion; at least, on anything like a large scale. The organizations involve separate plants and machinery, and great expense is attached to their upkeep and development. It is true that this expense is less than it would be without organization, and that the service rendered is far more efficient than unorganized efforts could possibly make it. Nevertheless, the duplication of these large plants and activities by denominations working parallel to each other is a great and unnecessary waste, from a material point of view. So obvious are the disadvantages of excessive duplication that the various societies of the Protestant denominations are now meeting together in "Councils"—

perhaps the most notable being the "Home Council," which includes representatives from practically all of the great Protestant Home Mission Boards. These "Councils," while helping the situation a little, like the Federations, are almost helpless to accomplish any really significant work. Their hands are tied behind and before, and they dare plan nothing aggressive, nothing worthy of the great Church of Christ universal, nothing which seriously disturbs the entrenched forces of sin. Let us suppose that these needless duplications in organization were at an end, that the Church had a united and harmonious plan of attack the nation over and the world over, who can measure the gain in efficiency which would result? Who can say how such a concerted plan of work would hearten the efforts of Christians everywhere, and how it would call forth resources which are now refused the cause on account of its inefficient methods for doing the business of the Kingdom?

The members of the various mission boards are usually broad-minded and charitable men. They can appreciate the situation fully, but they are powerless, in the main, to remedy it. In talking with one of them not long since, he remarked to the writer that the problems were such that he felt like withdrawing from the field. Nothing is, in fact, more disheartening to a man who really has a broad view of Christianity than to be obliged to become a party to the wasteful and petty strife between denominations on the home field. There is so much need for vital Christianity everywhere

that to waste resources and encourage bad feeling by planting and keeping alive unnecessary denominational churches is not appealing. One feels like John Wesley, in his famous saying already quoted, "Why can not Christians leave the devil to do his own work?" Bitterness, envy, bigotry and self-righteousness are certainly Satan's own progeny, and yet all of them are fostered and encouraged by denominationalism.

In benevolent activities there is less harm from duplication than is the case with the missionary organizations. Generally speaking, benevolence does not run great risk of loss of efficiency through duplication. Nevertheless, there is a very considerable waste here, owing to unnecessary boards and machinery for distribution, so that money needed for the widow and the orphan is sacrificed upon the altar of denominational inefficiency. The Roman Catholic Church far outclasses Protestantism in its benevolent activities, and this fact is largely due to unified organization. Hospitals are planted in almost every city, but they are not unnecessarily duplicated. Orphanages are located in strategic places, and the wisest generalship directs the whole work. Protestantism could easily outdo Romanism if she were united, but, a prey to divisions, her benevolent work, in a way the best apologetic in the possession of the Church, becomes fragmentary and in many instances entirely futile. Imagine a united Protestantism, wisely directing the funds pouring into its treasury for benevolent purposes, employing these funds

where they are most needed, avoiding duplications of institutions, and everywhere enthusiastic, aggressive, triumphant, what effect do you think this would have upon the world?

In the main, the outsider, silently if not openly, judges the Church by deed and not by creed. Benevolence speaks a universal language, and it is an argument which nobody can or cares to refute. To waste benevolent resources is worse than folly; it is a great wrong and sin against the Head of the Church, the longsuffering Son of man. Is there so much in our doctrinal differences, after all, that we can afford to allow them to work this great harm to suffering humanity?

**5. Duplication in
Educational In-
vestments**

We have spoken of the great loss in duplicating plants where they are not needed, especially in overchurched communities.

We have also referred to the economic waste caused by the duplication of great central plants for denominational activity. There is a field, however, to which we have scarcely alluded thus far—the building up of great educational institutions by the various denominations. Education is the greatest problem of the State, and one of the greatest problems of the Church. The right sort of education would do away with the necessity for a good deal of perfervid evangelism. The development of great institutions for educational purposes is a gigantic undertaking, and demands tremendous resources from a material point of view, as well as the most careful planning and the most far-sighted

vision. Enough money has been foolishly thrown away starting denominational colleges which could only struggle and die, to build an American university unequalled in influence and power. Religious education in a land like the United States becomes an exceedingly complex problem. The multitudinous denominations of Christendom make the problem still more difficult. With a united Protestantism—let us hope some day a united Christianity—the problem would be simple. The Church would have abundant resources to care for the whole situation. Great universities could be built and maintained, and the waste caused by unwise and unnecessary duplication of smaller institutions could be avoided. The broader point of view inculcated by the ideal of a united Church would have its reflex influence upon educational life and would entirely eliminate that tinge of sectarianism which denominational schools of the present day often exhibit. The cause of education would thus be benefited no less than the cause of religion.

Sectarian divisions and denominational narrowness have tended to drive great schools more and more away from the Church. No great educational institution can exist in a bigoted atmosphere, and the more bigoted and partisan the Church becomes, the less possible it is for it to develop colleges or universities worthy of the name. Conversely, the broader and more catholic the Church becomes, the more easily and gladly will education join forces with her. The Christian Church universal would attract scholarship everywhere. Most of scholars

are not willingly unsympathetic with religion or religious education. They must have a chance to draw their intellectual breath, however, and this they can not do in a narrowly dogmatic and sectarian atmosphere. Christian union would mean, therefore, a new era in religious education and a new era in religious progress.

6. Effect of Christian Union on the Business World

The twentieth century has been characterized largely by the dominance of business methods. Efficiency is everywhere the watchword of the day. The business man of the present time, and he is the dominant factor in our immediate civilization, judges, wisely or unwisely, everything by the pragmatic method. He has no patience and no time to waste with inefficiency. In the main, the business man of to-day is actively or passively a Christian. He believes in the Church for ancestral and theoretical reasons, but his practical sense is daily shocked by his clear-cut perception of the appalling inefficiency of church operations. He knows what excessive and unnecessary duplication means in his own business, and he knows what economic results must flow from such exhibitions of inefficient operation. He is not a theologian; he takes it for granted that Christian union is impossible, otherwise it would be here, and so he attends church, pays the least he conscientiously can, and thinks as little as possible upon the subject. Were all the theologians to become business men and all the business men theologians, for about a week, Chris-

tian union would be here before a retransformation would need to be effected.

The consequences of the business man's perception of the Church's inefficiency are numerous and weighty. In the first place, it chills his enthusiasm for the practical work of the Church. That work is of a business character. He understands it, if he does not understand theology, and he knows that the Church's way of going about it is exceedingly inefficient. He can not sympathize with inefficient methods, and so he loses interest in the whole subject. In this way the Church loses the services of many of the best business men of the nation, every year. In the second place, the business man's consciousness of how the Church does things on a small scale makes him suspicious of how things are done on a large scale. He thus loses interest in great projects which would otherwise appeal to him. The wonderful horizon of missions, the crying call of benevolence, the superb appeal of Christian education, are lost upon him. All he can read in these appeals is duplication, stupidity of management—inefficiency. Large sums are thus withheld every year from the treasury of the Lord. When one thinks of the resources which are thus kept back because of our divisions, as well as the resources which are really wasted for the same reason, he can begin to form some impression of what denominationalism is costing the Christian world.

The effect of withholding his money when he knows that he ought to give it is damaging and

disastrous to the business man himself. He becomes sordid, avaricious, narrowly formal, and loses all the graces which depend upon the exercise of Christian liberality. His influence upon the Church is thus in turn unfortunate and damaging. The inefficient Church, inefficient because of sectarian divisions, made him a miser, and as a miser he helps to make the inefficient Church still more inefficient.

We have not said anything of the man who is absolutely driven away from the Church because of its inefficiency. Doubtless hundreds and thousands belong to this category—the writer knows personally some men of great wealth and commanding influence who are non-Christians for this reason.

7. Effect of Christian Union upon Society at Large

The Church is, or should be, the greatest moral force in the community. When great issues come up for solution the weight of the Church should prove a mighty factor in behalf of the right. The forces of evil should recognize in the Church their most significant opponent. As a matter of fact, the Church influence is often almost negligible in social and political life. Politicians are not greatly disturbed by the opposition of a body split into jealous and warring fragments. Politicians know the value of unity better than Christians. They will sacrifice almost anything in order to "get together," for they know that unless they do "get together" they will be hopelessly defeated. The Church, however, appears to think that getting

together has no bearing upon its own success or failure to accomplish its mission. A united Church would soon solve the problem of the open saloon. A united Church would be able to cope with the social evil, and a disunited Church never will be able to cope with it; a united Church would drive corruption out of our municipalities. One of the encouraging things about the discouraging situation which confronts present-day denominationalism is that self-preservation must soon drive the churches together. The outside pressure is becoming so great that the inner barriers will have to give way.

One of the rising movements of the present day is socialism. The strongest arguments of socialistic agitators arise from the inefficiency of the Church. The original Church, if restored, would destroy materialistic socialism entirely. A divided Church, facing great and ever-increasing social problems, will find it increasingly difficult to meet the socialistic propaganda. Already socialism appeals strongly to the younger people, the idealists, of the congregation. The Church is on trial before the world. United she can conquer, divided she will fail in her mission to the race.

8. Effect of Christian Union upon Christians Themselves

Perhaps the most significant thing about a united Christendom is the immense and salutary effect which it would have upon the inner life of the Church. The spirit of division, of strife, of bitterness and of criticism is not the true spirit of Christianity. Rather is it the spirit of the Evil One. Nothing

tends to keep this spirit alive quite so much as sectarianism. It is hard to see how sectarian Christians can possibly develop those "fruits of the Spirit" which the Apostle Paul says must characterize the true Christian and the true Church. Look at those "fruits" for a moment and ask yourself which one of them can blossom in a sectarian atmosphere. *Love*—the very thought is foreign to schism. *Joy*—what true joy can come to one harsh and bitter of soul? *Peace*—no comment necessary. *Longsuffering*—Needed under the sectarian *regime*, but hard to preserve. *Gentleness*—no comment necessary. *Goodness*—how much of it can be kept amid an atmosphere of strife? *Faith*—greatly needed under denominationalism, but also hard to keep. *Meekness*—no comment necessary. *Temperance*—especially hard to preserve as applied to speech and temper.

These are the nine virtues which Paul says must characterize the Church and the individual as Christian. There is no Christianity without the spirit of Christ, and the spirit of Christ must always be known by its "fruits." Would not the world catch a new vision of Jesus if his followers were once harmoniously and heartily united? The world always sees Jesus through the medium of his disciples—they are his epistles, known and read of all men. What a distorted view of the Master is presented in sectarian Christianity! The ecclesiasticism of Papal power parodied the sublime teaching of the Nazarene and drove men away from him. The sectarian schisms of Protestantism are

accomplishing the same result to-day. Is it not time for a new Christianity, neither Papal nor Protestant, to arise—a Christianity both free and united, and restoring the glory and beauty of the Church of the apostolic age?

9. Summary and Conclusion

We have traced in this chapter the disadvantages, particularly from an economic point of view, of sectarian divisions, and we have attempted to show the superior advantages which, from every point of view, should accrue to the Christian world as a result of union. Prominent among these advantages are the removal of the evils of over-churching and of underchurching; the revivifying of the country church; the avoidance of waste in the duplication of great plants and organizations for missionary, benevolent and educational activities; the effect of greater efficiency in church work upon the business world, upon society at large and finally upon Christians themselves. The general *morale* of Christian union is yet feebly appreciated or there would be less difficulty in securing it. When men come to realize that it is not a question of perhaps sacrificing some cherished tenet for nothing, but that it is rather a question of choosing between a denominational tenet in regard to a matter of at best slight significance, and something which means the ultimate success of the whole activities of the Church, there will be little difficulty in realizing the ideal of Christian union. Most of people have very limited conceptions of the real value of a united Church. They do not appreciate

how paramount is such a conception for the success of Christianity. In business, in politics, in statecraft, in practically everything else, they are aware of the fundamental importance of and necessity for union; in the Church alone is this conception neglected. It is impossible that this state of affairs should exist for long. In the meantime, it is the duty of every follower of Jesus to exalt the ideal of Christian union, and, as far as possible, to remove every stumbling-block in the way of its realization.

Questions

1. What is meant by the problem of over-churching?
2. Give a practical illustration of this problem.
3. What is the only ultimate and feasible solution?
4. What is meant by underchurching?
5. What are the chief reasons responsible for this condition?
6. Sketch the problem of the country church.
7. What about the duplication of organized activities?
8. What steps are now being taken to avoid duplication?
9. Why are these steps necessarily largely ineffective?
10. How does division in church work hinder the financial progress of the Church?
11. What can you say of the duplication of educational institutions?
12. What would be the effect of Christian union on the business world?
13. Why do business men stand aloof from the Church?
14. How would Christian union affect society at large?
15. How would Christian union affect materialistic socialism?
16. What would be the internal effect of Christian union upon the Church itself?

X

The Forces Which Are Making for Unity

OUTLINE—CHAPTER X

1. THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT.
2. OTHER INFLUENCES MAKING FOR UNION.
3. THE METHOD OF ABSORPTION.
4. THE IDEA OF FEDERATION.
5. THE LAMBETH QUADRILATERAL.
6. PARTICULAR COMBINATIONS.
7. THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER.

X

THE FORCES WHICH ARE MAKING FOR UNITY

I. The Restoration Movement

The Restoration movement began as a plea for Christian union. Its immediate starting-point in the case of Stone was a desire to abandon human creeds in order that all Christians might enjoy a wider fellowship.¹ In the case of Thomas Campbell it was his desire to fellowship all Christians at the communion table which led to his first break with the Presbytery of Chartiers. The movement thus begun has always proclaimed Christian union as its battle-cry, and its influence has been tremendous in setting in motion the widespread union sentiment which now prevails all over Christendom. The means adopted for securing union, a complete return to the Church of the New Testament, remain as the most feasible plan thus far suggested. Union by compromise is everywhere recognized as impossible, and union by absorption on the part of any existing church is recognized as equally impossible. No church claim-

¹ See "Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery." "With concern they view the divisions and party spirit among professing Christians, principally owing to the adoption of human creeds and forms of governments, etc."—*Historical Documents*, p. 24.

ing to be Christian can object to the original apostolic Church, and by all returning to this, church union would be obviously consummated.

The progress of the Restoration movement has unfortunately been marred by some serious blunders. Perhaps the most serious and notable of these mistakes has been the tendency toward legalism exhibited by many of the churches. Pleading for a return to the correct form of the New Testament Church, it is to be feared that some of the Restorationists have overemphasized the question of form and exalted it above the heart and content of the religious life. This, of course, is only Romanism under a new guise, and wherever it has appeared it has proven disastrous to the movement. So, also, a slavish literalness has led some of the churches to deny the rightfulness of ordinary expedients for church work and has thus barred the way to progress. This legalism has actually produced a new schism in the movement in certain parts of the country, and has incalculably injured the acceptance of the plea. In spite of all these mistakes, the cause has gone forward by leaps and bounds, and in a century has won an influential place in the religious life of the nation. At the time of writing, while exact figures are not attainable, it is safe to say that at least one million four hundred thousand communicants are numbered in the churches pleading for union upon the basis of a restoration of primitive Christianity. If the breadth and catholic spirit of the plea can be properly maintained and presented, the outlook seems

very encouraging. If, however, the movement should degenerate into a legalistic sect, its influence will speedily pass away. These facts should occupy the serious attention of all who are associated with the work of the churches in question.

2. Other Influences Making for Union

The Restoration movement can no longer claim to represent the only definite propaganda for Christian union. Other communions have taken up the idea and in their own way are pushing it forward. This is exceedingly significant, for it points toward the dawn of a brighter day. When the real passion for union gets hold of a church or of an individual, the greatest problem is already solved. In the days of the Campbells the churches openly opposed the idea of union—they wanted to be separated, and gloried in their schisms. Now Protestant Christianity as a whole is becoming ashamed of its denomination-alism and is anxious to get together. The means whereby this result is to be accomplished are still uncertain in the minds of the vast majority, but the earnest desire for the goal is present, and this desire means much for the future.

The chief steps which have been definitely taken or suggested are the following: (1) The method of absorption, (2) the idea of federation, (3) the Lambeth Quadrilateral, and (4) particular combinations. We shall outline them briefly in the order in which they have been named, beginning with what is perhaps the most popular plan of the idea of absorption.

3. The Method of Absorption

This method is in no sense new, nor has it very much to recommend it. It has almost always been true that the lion would gladly make peace with the lamb, provided the lamb will lie down inside of the lion. The chief advocate of absorption has been the Roman Catholic Church. Earnest and devout Catholics have often lamented the schisms of Christendom, and have frequently appealed to their wandering brethren to return to the fold. Of course, the only way suggested is by frank repentance and acceptance of the ancient faith. A fine example of this sort of appeal is found in an article by the Bishop of Cremona in the *Constructive Quarterly* for September, 1913. The spirit of the article is admirable, but the good bishop sees no hope of any possible means of union save by the unconditional submission of Protestantism. The Catholic Church can not yield, can not change, according to its own nature and rules. Protestants *can* change, therefore it is possible for them to come to Rome, though Rome can not come to them. The bishop is very cordial in his invitation,¹ and his motives are doubtless of the best, but he himself seems to recognize the apparent hopelessness of his task. The very fact that Rome

¹ "Come over the gulf to us: we will forthwith throw our arms about your neck, we shall all be sons of the same Mother and of the same Father who is in heaven; and quickly the earth shall be changed, and the great ship of the united Church will sail in safety upon the troubled waters. . . . What joy! What an event for the Church of Christ!"—*Constructive Quarterly*, September, 1913, "An Appeal for Unity from Italy."

can not change is what keeps Protestants away from Rome. Had she been able to change and purge herself thoroughly there would have been no schism in the first place.

The absorption method holds out little hope of success. None the less, it is a fine thing that some churches are really anxious to have everybody else in their fold. There was a time when Rome and the other communions would have spurned an appeal like that of the bishop of northern Italy. It is pleasant to be invited, even though you can not accept the invitation.

Other churches beside Rome have longed for absorption, they, of course, to do the absorbing. The Greek Church has generally been understood as "willin'," and the Anglican communion has been positively anxious. In the same issue of the *Quarterly* which contains the article of the Bishop of Cremona is a lengthy and very tolerant plea from Archbishop Platon, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. The archbishop does not put the idea of absorption as clearly as the bishop, but it is present as an undercurrent. He says very admirably: "We must become one. All sincere believers in Christ recognize this nowadays, but religious separation has penetrated so deeply into the very roots of Christian life and teaching that it stands like a stone wall or a 'great chasm' between the different Christian confessions."¹

The archbishop knows that we can all become

¹ *Constructive Quarterly*, September, 1913, article on "Unity is Possible," by Archbishop Platon.

one by becoming "Orthodox," but he sees no very clear method of union after any other fashion.

The spirit of these two articles, written by representatives of the most far removed churches from the bulk of Protestantism, is encouraging. It is good that the Bishop of Cremona should so earnestly desire union; it is also good that the archbishop should say, "We must become one." Still, there is nothing in their articles, aside from the spirit in which they write, which gives one even a tangible inkling of the consummation of Christian union.

4. The Idea of Federation

Federation, as a method of eliminating the evils of sectarianism, has made its appeal to many Christians of the present day. It is a sort of compromise arrangement by which denominations agree not to quarrel with each other and to work together as far as they can without disturbing the denominational attitude. Its natural analogy is a confederation of states in the body politic. It sprang up in various sections of the country during the last two or three decades—the New York Federation being one of the earliest examples. So apparent had the evils of sectarianism become that in 1905 a general conference met in Carnegie Hall, New York City, at which nearly all of the Protestant bodies in the United States were represented. At this conference a tentative constitution was adopted, and the "Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America" was formally launched upon the world. The first quadrennial

meeting of the council was held in Philadelphia, December, 1908, at which time Bishop E. R. Hendrix, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was elected president. The second meeting was held in December, 1912, in Chicago, and Dean Shailer Matthews, of the Northern Baptist Convention, was elected to succeed Bishop Hendrix. The most striking note of the council has been its utterances upon social service. These utterances are advanced and in keeping with the spirit of the age, as well as the original spirit of Christ. The constitution of the Federal Council provides that all churches which recognize "Jesus Christ as their divine Lord and Saviour" may become constituent members. Representatives are selected in proportion to the number of communicants adhering to the churches which constitute the organization. Each church is allowed four members at large and one additional member for every fifty thousand communicants or major fraction thereof. The sessions of the council have been harmonious, and while varying shades of opinion are, of course, represented, yet one who has attended all of its sessions from the beginning can easily mark the rising tide in favor of organic union which it represents. Perhaps a majority of the council to-day at heart favor real union and look upon federation as only a stepping-stone to something better. This sentiment is sure to grow from year to year.

The Federal Council has received the approval and support, in some fashion or degree, of every

Protestant body of significance in America, with one notable exception.¹ Several communions made up of independent congregations and having no "overhead" organizations have sent delegates with the distinct understanding that they could not speak or act in official or representative capacity. The fatal weakness of the federation idea has never found better expression than in the words of Bishop Anderson, of Chicago, in his charge to the annual convention of his diocese, delivered May 28, 1913:

"Come right home here to Chicago. There are communities on the outskirts of this city with either no community church, or with churches supported by missionary boards and supporting none. Many religious bodies are trying to meet this situation, both at home and abroad, by some sort of gentleman's agreement under which it is sought to avoid overlapping. This is good. There would seem to be no reason why those denominations which are scarcely distinguishable from each other should not adopt some such plan, at least as a temporary measure. As a permanent policy, it is open to two grave objections. It acquiesces in divisions, and it deprives the people of the privilege of being anything else than sectarians. It seems to say that divisions are bad, but must stay. Worse still, it dooms certain sections to a narrow Christianity. No denominationalist claims that his denomination is the whole Church. Consequently, the division of territory would establish a sectarian rather than a

¹ The Southern Baptist Convention.

catholic Christianity. Yes, there may be temporary expedients, but there can be only one permanent policy—the reunion of Christendom.”¹

Bishop Anderson has lucidly stated in the above splendid paragraph the fatal weakness of federation, “Federation must always doom people to a narrow Christianity.” It is inconceivable that such a plan should ever prove the final word in the union of God’s Church. As the bishop says, it has its value as a temporary expedient, but the Christian world is not going to be satisfied with temporary expedients in a matter of such prime importance. The order of the day is from sectarianism to federation and from federation to real union.

5. The Lambeth Quadrilateral

As far back as the year 1853, the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church appointed a commission to confer with the various Protestant churches in America in regard to the problem of Christian union. In 1880 the bishops of the same church set forth a declaration relating to what they styled “the solidarity of the Catholic Episcopate,” and again broaching the subject of union. Finally, in 1886 they proposed a quadrangular basis of union which was indorsed by the Lambeth Conference in London in 1888. From the latter circumstance the plan is usually styled the “Lambeth Quadrilateral.” Its provisions are as follows:

(1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as “containing all things necessary to

¹ “The Manifestation of Unity,” by the Rt. Rev. C. P. Anderson, D.D., Bishop of Chicago, pp. 22, 23.

salvation" and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(2) The Apostles' Creed as being the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement, of the Christian faith.

(3) The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself—baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.

(4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the method of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of the Church.

The Lambeth Quadrilateral has been before the Christian world for a quarter of a century, but has so far failed to achieve the slightest actual result in the way of accomplishing its purpose. Most Protestants look upon it as only a modified method of absorption, especially in view of its inclusion of the Historic Episcopate. It seems inconceivable that Christendom will ever "get together" on the basis of the Lambeth proposals. Episcopalians themselves, doubtless, in large measure, share this conviction.

6. Particular Combinations

A further symptom of the increased feeling for Christian union may be discovered in the efforts which have been recently put forth to amalgamate churches which are separated by only trivial differences. This is a definite step toward organic union, as the results, so far as they go, are real "unions" and not merely federations. Perhaps

the most notable illustration in recent years is that of the Presbyterian Church in America with the Cumberland Presbyterians. This was consummated in due form a few years since over the objections of a turbulent minority among the Cumberlands. This minority has contested the union in different State courts and has occasionally secured a decision in its favor. The bulk of the Cumberland Church seems to have gone over peaceably and cordially to the larger body of their brethren.

A still larger scheme for union was that of the Congregationalist, United Brethren and Methodist Protestant Churches. After much discussion, this project, however, seems to have fallen through. The Congregationalists, having practically no central authority, find it difficult to do any sort of amalgamating "from the top." The suggestion of union, however, has done good.

Other attempts at particular amalgamation may be scheduled as follows:

In New Zealand the Wesleyans and Methodists have consolidated.

In Australia the Church of England and the Presbyterians are engaged in negotiations looking toward consolidation.

In England the Established Church and the Moravians have established relations looking toward ultimate amalgamation.

In the United States the Northern Baptist Convention and the Free Baptist Conference consolidated their general work two years ago and recommended organic union to their constituents.

The Evangelical and United Evangelical Churches of America are making overtures to each other.

Among the Methodist groups there is considerable discussion of a united Methodism. So far this discussion has evolved no tangible results.

The Presbyterian Assemblies, U. S. A., U. S. and United, met in 1913 in the same city¹ at the same time, but no definite steps were taken toward union. The U. S. A. appears to be "willin'," but the other branches are not.

There is some talk of the union of the Reformed Church in the United States with the Reformed Church in America.²

The latest scheme for amalgamation appears to be one of the most hopeful broached thus far. It comes from the Dominion of Canada, and substantial progress seems to have been achieved in line with its realization. Definite overtures have been made for a union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of the Dominion, and, as already stated, indications appear favorable as regards the consummation of the undertaking. Certain special conditions make the task easier than it would be in the United States, and the experiment will be watched with interest by all who are concerned with the progress of Christianity.³

¹ Atlanta, Georgia. ² For fuller details in regard to particular combinations of churches, see the 1913 report of the Joint Convention of the World Conference on Faith and Order. ³ For a full discussion of the Canadian overtures for union, see "The Way to Union," by Arthur S. Morton (William Briggs, Toronto, 1912). Presbyterian opposition still retards this project (Jan. 1, 1916).

All efforts toward particular amalgamations of denominations are worthy of encouragement, and yet it is readily seen that they do not touch the heart of the question. Should all the little denominations be wiped out and only a group of large ones left, the denominational problem would still be with us. Nevertheless, the obliteration of any kind of denominationalism is a good thing, and it certainly simplifies a problem to reduce it to fewer figures.

Amalgamation, along with federation, shows the trend in the Christian world. Christians everywhere are beginning to see union as the blind man first saw his fellows; that is, "as trees walking." It will not be long, in the providence of God, before the clearer vision will come.

**7. The World
Conference on
Faith and Order**

In 1910 the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church appointed a joint commission to bring about a World Conference on Faith and Order. The joint commission was composed of some of the leading members of the church, with Bishop Anderson as chairman. Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, one of the original members, financed the commission with a liberal endowment, and the report for 1913 shows that a great deal of really valuable work has been accomplished. Instead of going about the task of union by submitting a definite platform like the Lambeth Quadrilateral, the proposition is to hold a universal World Conference, at which the problem of unity may be discussed freely and without

hindrance by all. The definite purpose is fully outlined in the following quotation from the report for 1913:

"1. That the true ideal of the World Conference is of a great meeting participated in by men of all Christian churches within the scope of the call, at which there shall be consideration not only of points of difference and agreement between Christians, but of the values of various approximations of belief characteristic of the several churches.

"2. That while organic unity is the ideal which all Christians should have in their thoughts and prayers, yet the business of the commission is not to force any particular scheme of unity, but to promote the holding of such a conference as is above described.

"3. That in order that the World Conference may have a maximum value, the questions there to be considered shall be formulated in advance by committees of competent men representative of various schools of thought, these committees to be appointed at as early a date as is consistent with assurance that their truly representative character can not be successfully challenged.

"4. That among the subjects for joint consideration by the Executive Committee of the Episcopal Commission and the General Committee appointed at this meeting are the following:

"First, What questions must be considered before it can be considered how the World Conference shall be convened, what its membership shall be, and when and where it shall assemble.

"Second, How such prior questions can best be considered and answered.

"Third, How the matters for consideration by the World Conference shall be ascertained and referred to the committees which are to study them, and how and when those committees shall be appointed."¹

The report indicates that the overtures for the proposed World Conference have been cordially met by Christians of almost all communions. Commissions have been appointed in nearly all countries of the globe, and the outlook for the conference becoming a reality is encouraging.

The report states that the three chief hindrances to its work have been (1) indifference, (2) impatience and (3) suspicion. Under "Indifference" it says some excellent things. For example, take the following:

"Indifference arises chiefly from a lack of realization of the overwhelming importance of the restoration of visible and organic unity among Christians; but also from disbelief in its practical possibility. It is therefore an important branch of our work to persuade those whom we can reach of the shameful evils which flow from our unhappy divisions, of the undoubted will of Christ that visible unity should be restored and maintained, of the futility of all substitutes for organic union in maintaining such unity, and of the grounds for belief that reunion can be brought about if we

¹ Report of Joint Commission to the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1913, pp. 17, 18.

abandon unchristian tempers, seek to understand one another, and, above all, lend ourselves in prayer and unselfish effort to the guidance of God, the Holy Spirit."¹

The World Conference Commission is certainly headed in the right direction. It brushes aside all substitutes for organic union, and its analysis of the difficulties in the way is strictly in accordance with the facts. The mere circumstance that a man with such a catholic point of view as Bishop Anderson is at the head of the movement is a guarantee that it will get somewhere. It is difficult for the writer to distinguish between the general conception of union which appears to characterize the bishop and that which actuated Thomas Campbell or Barton Stone. The fact that this ideal is being pushed by a prominent cleric in the Established Church is an exceedingly hopeful indication. Bishop Anderson's position gives him commanding influence, both in his own communion and in the religious world at large. We do not believe that we can close this chapter better than by allowing him to sum up the advantages of organic union as opposed to federation or any other similar arrangement. He says:

"Let us aim high. Let us not be afraid to place organic unity before us as the goal, and let us not despair of comprising all Christendom within it. There may be intermediate steps to be taken, but they are steps on a journey, not stopping-places.

¹ Report, p. 22.

Interdenominationalism may do some good in places where it does no harm. So far it seems only to have pronounced its blessing on a state of division which it deplors. Federation may do much good where it is workable. Its great value seems to be the witness that it bears to the necessity of something more than federation. Co-operation in good works is absolutely necessary so far as it is practicable between churches which come at things in directly opposite ways. But, brethren, organic unity has in it all that these 'flickering expedients' have, and infinitely more. The greater includes the less, but the less does not include the greater. Interdenominationalism, federation, the co-operation of unattached bodies, have just enough merit in them to be tantalizing, but not enough merit to warrant their advocates in devoting precious time to their promotion. They have this merit, that they indicate that men no longer apotheosize divisions, and that they are beginning to dream of better things. While we are at it, let us aim to reach the goal that Christ set up; namely, visible unity."¹

¹ "The Manifestation of Unity," p. 44.

Questions

1. What part has the Restoration movement played in the progress toward union?
2. What blunders have marred the progress of the Restoration cause?
3. What four methods of union have been suggested aside from the plea of Campbell and his associates?
4. Define and illustrate the method of absorption.
5. Sketch briefly the idea of federation.
6. What are the chief virtues and defects of the federal movement?
7. What is meant by the "Lambeth Quadrilateral"?
8. Give some illustrations of particular combinations of churches.
9. Outline the movement for amalgamation in the Dominion of Canada.
10. State the origin and purpose of the proposed World Conference on Faith and Order.
11. What have been the chief hindrances in the way of calling the conference?
12. What ideal appears to dominate the plan for the World Conference?
13. What is Bishop Anderson's conception of unity?

XI

Forces Making for Unity (Continued)

OUTLINE—CHAPTER XI

1. THE FOREIGN FIELD—URGENCY OF THE NEED.
2. UNION IN CHINA.
3. THE CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.
4. UNION IN JAPAN.
5. UNION IN INDIA.
6. THE EDINBURGH WORLD CONFERENCE.

XI

FORCES MAKING FOR UNITY (Continued)

**1. The Foreign Field—
Urgency of the
Need** Many of those most conversant with the present status of the union movement in Christendom believe that one of the greatest contributions now being made is coming from the foreign field. The situation in heathen lands is very different from what it is at home. The opposition on the part of heathenism is compact and powerful. For the Christian forces to fall apart on the firing-line is to commit suicide. The doctrinal problems which play such sad havoc at home find little place in the strenuous life of the missionary. As Bishop Anderson has well expressed it: "What does the non-Christian know or care about our ecclesiastical differences? . . . Why should the non-Christian be contaminated with interdenominational controversies, especially in the kindergarten stage of his Christian education? Why should he be told anything about those family quarrels of ours out of which the Thirty-nine Articles, the Westminster Confession, the Augsburg Confession, and all the sects of Christendom, have sprung? . . . The united Church can preach a fuller gospel, provide more men to preach it, and do it with a more economic expenditure of God's money,

than can the aggregate of all the churches. The choice in non-Christian lands must be between Christ and some other master, between the Church and the world, between the Church and no Church. It can not be wise to compel them to make a choice between churches. If it be said that the missionary propaganda minimizes or conceals the ecclesiastical differences, then they are either wrong in doing so, or else we are wrong in maintaining those diverse organizations whose differences our agents have to conceal in the interest of a truer Christianity.”¹

The heathen populations can not understand our sectarian divisions. To confuse them by claiming “Lo! Christ is here,” or “Lo! Christ is there,” is to utterly defeat the program of Christianity. There are immense obstacles at best in the path of the missionary. The tremendous force of racial and national prejudices, the impact of successive centuries of previous training in an alien faith, the difficulty of bringing the message in a foreign tongue, the natural pride in old historic creeds, to say nothing of the inherent opposition of entrenched forms of vice and vicious customs, all present such formidable barriers that sectarian Christianity is almost helpless before them. The very exigencies of the situation tend to force Christians of all creeds and parties together. They can not afford to lose the battle because of foolish quarrels over matters of trifling significance. Hence, we find that the uniform tendency on the mission field is to

¹ “The Manifestation of Unity,” pp. 17-19.

fraternize and get together. Even Catholics and Protestants have been known, under these conditions, to work side by side harmoniously. Some of the greatest work on the field has been carried on, the China Inland Mission for example, by interdenominational agencies. A. E. Cory relates his conversation with Ogden, the Tibetan missionary: "I said, 'Ogden, do you want the various western divisions of the Church to come into Tibet? Will the Church that conquers Tibet be the divided Church of sectarianism?' Trembling with emotion, he uttered these words, 'There is no room for sectarianism in Tibet.'"¹

2. Union in China Mr. Cheng Ching Yi, a native Chinese Christian, in an informing article in the *International Review of Missions*, sums up the situation in the Celestial Kingdom as follows:

"First: The evangelization of China depends largely upon the men and women of the soil.

"Second: The chief occupation of the missionary in the future is to develop more and more his energy and time in training and educating that Christian youth for the ministry and similar works.

"Third: The church work, as far as possible, should be gradually left in the hands of the Chinese pastors; the task of the missionaries is the founding of the Church and not the raising of the structure.

"Fourth: The Church of China must be scien-

¹ Address of A. E. Cory at the National Convention of the Disciples, Louisville, Ky., Oct. 20, 1912.

tifically taught and trained for self-support and self-government. Responsibility and privilege go hand in hand and can not be separated.

"Fifth: The Chinese Church should be based upon union. There was and is no necessity for introducing church divisions in the East, and there is every reason to believe the Church would have been better developed if such conditions had been non-existent. The vital oneness of the Church of Christ, which I think is even deeper than unity, should have characterized the Church as one of its especial features. For this our Lord and Master several times pleaded with the Father on behalf of his people. People think, however, that the churches in the West under present circumstances have reached the 'hardened ease' state of affairs, and that such a union can only be looked upon as figurative speech or an imaginary vision. Granted that this is so, here in China is the new Church tender and young. Should we not turn our eyes from historical or traditional interest and try to remember the word of Christ and his prayer, and in China, at least, turn over a new leaf?

"Sixth: Christian literature is the one other matter of chief importance. For many years the Christian Literature Society of China has done excellent work. It has powerfully helped China in her growth and advancement, both directly and indirectly. The emphasis of this branch of Christian activity in the future of China is not so much on the word 'literature,' but rather the word 'Christian.'

"Seventh: The religious training of boys and girls should occupy a warm corner in the heart of every student of missions. There is in China a growing tendency to undervalue Scriptural teaching on the part of the young people in Christian schools, and even among college-trained men there is a vast amount of ignorance of Bible truth, but we all believe that the Christian youth is the hope of the Church.

"Eighth: Scientific and systematic teaching of the word of God is another matter deserving careful consideration."

In another part of the same article, the talented author has this to say:

"The name of the Chinese Church should be known throughout the land as the Chinese Christian Church, and the separate parts distinguished from each other only by the location that the church occupies; as, the Chinese Christian Church of Peking.

"Another thing, the result of church divisions as seen in the West affords another incentive to union of China. In the nature of things, China is by no means interested in such divisions, and, in fact, the very opposite is the general opinion of the Chinese Christians to-day."

This native point of view is so admirably expressed that we have quoted at large from the article and regret that limitations of space do not permit us to cite the argument entire. It will be observed that the Chinese Christians see things as their Occidental neighbors ought to see them, and

doubtless would see them if long-standing prejudices did not interfere.

It is noteworthy, also, that the Chinese Church is to-day putting in practice these sentiments. Protestant Christianity in China is very largely one. The missionaries work together, and do so in complete and absolute harmony.

3. The Chinese Christian Church In line with the above suggestions it may be noted that the Chinese Christian Church is already a power in the land. The ideas back of this Church are well indicated in a statement contained in the *Missionary Review of the World* for October, 1911. It is written by Mr. Cheng, a member of the church. "We Chinese Christians," he says, "would like to see in the near future a united Christian Church in China without denominational distinctions. We are not going to convert the world into a world of Methodism, or Anglicanism, or any other 'ism.' The Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only ideal for the world.

"Speaking generally, the Chinese Christians take little or no interest in denominationalism. Very few of them know the historical origin of their own particular denomination, still less do they feel the force of it. They belong to certain denominations just because they were so led to Christianity. . . . I ask along what lines will Chinese Christians be led to realize their own responsibility as well as privilege? Are we going to form a kind of Chinese Congregationalism, Chinese Presbyterianism and the rest of it? Surely a united Chinese Christian

Church, without regard to any denomination, is the right direction to aim at. Now is the time to let the future Chinese Church be well grounded and founded on a solid basis; viz., a union Church.

"It means difficulty, and perhaps sacrifice, on the part of the various missionary societies. But, nevertheless, it is worth while. The sacrifice, if one may use such a great word, is comparatively a small thing when we think of the welfare and gain of the Chinese Church; for, after all, it is the Chinese Church we should be working for, and not our denominations, nor even our missions. Sometimes we need to go with our divine Master to the top of the Mount of Olives, where we can obtain a larger and wider view of the world's need.

"The diversities of forms, of rites, of opinions, of the different denominations, real as they are, sink into insignificance when compared with the solid unity of Christian love. May that love manifest itself brighter and brighter as the days go by, so that all the churches shall be bound up in oneness of harmony, and unity be the motto of all! Such majestic unity will be a blessing here in its time, and unspeakably precious for the world's good, and it will be transfigured at last into the unity and alliance of the Home above, where all the faces look one way, concentrated upon the great white throne, and the One who sits upon it."¹

We have preferred allowing the Chinese to speak for themselves in the matter of Christian unity in

¹ *Missionary Review of the World*, article on "The Chinese Christian Church," October, 1911.

China. The movement has been growing rapidly, and only the denominational boards at home keep even the mission stations apart to-day. Mr. A. E. Cory, in his Louisville address, referred pointedly to this fact:

"The first great hindrance to union that I would mention is the sectarianism of all the churches at home. A missionary of another church said to me one time: 'Mr. Cory, if the missionaries were to get out of China, the Church in China would be united in six months.' He said: 'It is only the hand of the divisions of the West that keeps the Chinese Church apart.' I am not prepared to say whether this was a very extreme statement or not; I only know that many great steps of union that would in no way have compromised any truth, but would have contributed to Christ's divine will, have been hindered by the sectarianism of the Church at home."¹

Mr. Cory's statement is well paralleled by the striking comment of Mr. F. B. Meyer, the well-known English student and writer upon religious themes. Mr. Meyer, after a trip to China a year or two ago, in an interview published by the *Sunday School Chronicle*, stated that denominationalism had about served its day on the mission field. He added, according to the *Chronicle*:

"There is little doubt that if the European and American missionaries were withdrawn to-morrow, the native Christians in China would flow together in one great Church. . . .

¹ A. E. Cory, Louisville address, Oct. 20, 1912.

"If ever the hour should come that the religion of Jesus should become extinguished in these Western lands, I believe that the re-enforcements from China and Japan would be forthcoming, and that the East would a second time give to the West the pearl of immeasurable price."

A practical phase of union in China, from the educational point of view, has been the establishment of the University of Nanking as a union school, the Methodists, Presbyterians North, Presbyterians South and Disciples of China joining in the movement. Those who have visited the school report gains for the cause of education, but many think it impossible to declare against denominationalism in a school supported by denominational funds. It is but an experiment and must be judged by its fruits.¹

4. Union in Japan The "Church of Christ in Japan," representing a number of missions, has attracted widespread attention. The union policy began with the missionary conference held in Tokio in 1900, at which time there was appointed a "Standing Committee of Co-operative Missions." This committee consisted of one or more representatives of each Protestant mission, and has held regular meetings since its appointment. It has also published an annual known as "The Christian Movement in Japan." In commenting upon this situation, a recent writer says:

"It is practically certain that the conference will

¹ See also the organization of the Shantung Christian University.—*Missionary Review of the World*, October, 1911.

henceforth stand for a close federation, if not the organic union, of all the denominations in Japan; it will stand for a broad comprehension of the whole missionary problem in Japan, a closer study of the field and a better distribution of forces; and it will stand for a strong forward movement in Christian education. Through this conference, also, a strong co-operative Christian literature committee is about to be formed, to meet a great need in Japan, and there will be union effort in the framing of a uniform language-study course, in providing for the education of missionaries' children and in social and eleemosynary work."¹

Japan presents strong indications of ultimate unity with the Protestant churches grouped in a few general divisions for the present. The largest of these divisions are the Church of Christ (Reformed and Presbyterian communions), United Methodist (all Methodist bodies) and the Kumiais or native Congregationalists. It will be observed that these groups are separated along the lines of the three great historical polities—Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational.

The union sentiment is so strong, however, that all students of the situation are anticipating a complete amalgamation of forces in the not distant future. The opposition to Christianity in Japan is strong, both because of the native pride of the Oriental and the habitual lax morality of the old civilizations as opposed to the sterner code of Jesus.

¹ *Missionary Review of the World*, Vol. XXIV., p. 395.

The victory of Japan over Russia, a reputedly Christian nation, increased the feeling of opposition, and the divisions among Christians have not appealed to the keenly analytical mind of the inhabitants of Nippon. Christianity can not afford to split in Japan. Victory, and even existence, depend upon union. The Church at home does not fully realize the situation, but the missionaries do realize it and are sure, in the end, to act accordingly. From some of the Oriental mission fields it is already reported that the native Christians and their teachers have actually refused help from America when they understood that this help could only be procured by perpetuating denominationalism. In a notable speech made a few years ago in Philadelphia, Mr. Robert E. Speer said with reference to the policy of delay urged by some of the more conservative advocates of union: "You gentlemen may delay if you wish, but the men, the younger men, on the mission field are not going to delay. They are going to get together."

5. Union in India The union movement in India has been less pronounced than in China and Japan, but it has been thoroughly active none the less. For the most part it has assumed the form of federation, the second conference being held at Jubbulpore, August 9, 1911, and the first at the same place in April, 1909. We have no reports of a later conference. The constitution suggested at the first meeting was discussed and adopted at the second. The main lines followed in the document run parallel with the constitution of the Fed-

eral Council of the Churches of Christ in America. It is announced that all the organized churches in India are co-operating in this movement with the exception of the Anglicans and the American Baptists. The *Missionary Herald*, the official organ of the American Board, in a summary of the situation in India, has the following to say:

"Hardly a year passes without some new union schemes being reported as an advance upon those preceding. We in America would do well to study such movements toward organic unity and federation upon this mission field. This can be said even though all the plans for union proposed and adopted have not yet become fully operative. Last year we reported a union of Presbyterian and Congregational churches into a 'United Church of South India.' A union theological college for South India is to be started within a few months, to be supported by the missions of the London Missionary Society, the United Free Church of Scotland, the English Wesleyan and the Dutch Reformed Missions, and, if possible, by our own Madura mission. In the Marathi field we hear of a proposed scheme of federation where organized union with missions of churches is not yet feasible. A union paper is now in vogue in Madura."

6. The Edinburgh World Conference The World Missionary Conference which assembled in Edinburgh, Scotland, June 14-23, 1910, marked a new era in the history of modern progress toward unity, as well as in the history of modern missions. Twelve hundred

registered delegates from all parts of the earth attended the conference, with as many more unofficial delegates. Every Protestant communion doing any considerable work in the mission field was represented, even the orthodox High Churchmen of England joining in the movement. The chairman was Mr. John R. Mott, and the *personnel* of the delegates included Mr. William J. Bryan, Mr. Seth Low, Lord Balfour, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and scores of others almost equally well known. The work of the conference was handled by eight commissions, classified as follows: (1) Carrying the gospel into all the non-Christian world. (2) The native Church and its workers. (3) Education in relation to the Christianization of national life. (4) The missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions. (5) The preparation of missionaries. (6) The home base of missions. (7) Relation of missions to governments. (8) Co-operation and unity.

The last commission touched most directly upon the question of Christian union, but it was observed by those present that the note of union was the dominant note throughout the conference. The editor of the *Missionary Review of the World* said that "one of the dominant notes of the Edinburgh Conference was the desire for more unity and closer co-operation among missionary workers of all Protestant denominations."¹ The author of "*Pro Christi et Ecclesia*," writing in the *Hibbert*

¹ *Missionary Review of the World*, Vol. XXIII., p. 117.

Journal for October, 1910, goes further and says: "At the outset the Archbishop of Canterbury gave forcible expression to the idea that missionary activity must be the central concern of the Christian Church. Later on neither he nor any one else would have made such an assertion, because to all that assembly it became self-evident. The brotherhood of man! Christ the only intense joy of human life, the need to share the best of life with all the brethren—these were conceptions expressed in different ways, by such a varied multitude of separate speakers, that the view of the world they involved became insistent."¹

Later on in the same article the writer says:

"It behooves the churches of Christendom to discover as quickly as possible some basis of union which will allow for some differences of opinion and of devotional practice. This was the most important subject before the conference." He says also: "Many Christian workers came there bold in the belief that the Christian's personal relation to the living Christ could be alone the basis of a unity visible in one organization. As one speaker put it, 'We do not want theological definitions;' all that we want is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever."²

Most interesting, however, were the speeches, many of them very brief, from mission leaders themselves, detailing the progress of the union sentiment. Said Dr. O. L. Kilburn, of Chengtu,

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. IV., p. 76. ² *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. IX., p. 80.

West China: "We have a union mission press doing work for all, a union Christian magazine in Chinese, a union hymnal. . . . Our aim is one Christian Church for China." Rev. S. S. Thomas, of India, gave three reasons why we should unite: (1) The forces against us; (2) that the world may believe; (3) the ideal of Christ. To these Rev. G. Currie Martin added four others: (1) The saving in money; (2) the better division of labor; (3) the gain in efficiency; (4) the resulting advance in the Kingdom. The Bishop of Southwark, a High Churchman, said quite truly: "We may be loyal to the things that divide us and yet loyal to the things that unite us." Dr. Arthur J. Brown, of the American Presbyterian Board followed this and said: "There is no reason why we should reproduce on the foreign fields the bad state of things at home. Some time ago, some missionaries decided on a joint catechism—putting within the body of the book the points of agreement and in the appendix the points of difference. When the work was accomplished all were struck by the strength of the body of the text and the weakness of the appendix: Why not follow the example of modern science and cut out the appendix?" Mr. N. W. Rowell, of Toronto, Canada, representing the strong union sentiment now prevalent in the Dominion, said very forcibly: "We can appeal to men to push a united work in the world, but not to perpetuate competing denominations."¹

¹ See the *Missionary Review of the World* for September, 1910, for an admirable sketch of the Edinburgh Conference.

The proceedings of the conference have been published in nine volumes and constitute a storehouse of valuable information. The influence of the great gathering has been tremendous in practically every department of church activity and life. It has especially stimulated the movement for unity. Many thoughtful men to-day believe that union at home will follow union abroad. On the foreign field, men reach the primitive gospel more easily than they reach it at home. There is a broader vision and a truer aim. Foreign Missions are indissolubly bound up with the great movement for Christian unity.

Questions

1. State briefly the necessity for union on the foreign field.
2. What progress has union made in China?
3. Summarize the argument of Cheng Ching Yi.
4. Sketch the Chinese Christian Church.
5. What is the chief obstacle to union on the foreign field?
6. Summarize briefly the testimony of Cory and Meyer.
7. Sketch the progress of union in Japan.
8. Give the testimony of Mr. Robert E. Speer with regard to unity on the foreign field.
9. What progress has union made in India?
10. Outline the Edinburgh World Conference.
11. How did the conference deal with the subject of Christian union?
12. Give the testimony of representative speakers at the conference.
13. What has been the value of the Edinburgh Conference in fostering the sentiment for Christian union?

XII

Interdenominational Activities—Prospect and Retrospect

OUTLINE—CHAPTER XII

1. THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL IDEA.
2. THE Y. M. C. A.
3. THE Y. P. S. C. E.
4. THE LAYMEN'S MOVEMENT.
5. THE UNITY COMMISSIONS.
6. UNION LITERATURE.
7. A HOPEFUL VIEW.
8. WELLS' LITTLE CATECHISM FOR CHRISTIANS.

XII

INTERDENOMINATIONAL ACTIVITIES— PROSPECT AND RETROSPECT

1. The Interdenominational Idea

One of the forces making for that better understanding between Christians which is essential for union has been the growth of the interdenominational idea. The point of contact here has been fundamentally action rather than thought, service rather than creed. As the understanding has become better, these denominational movements have vaguely entered the field of doctrine—keeping always, as far as possible, on common ground. Of course, the principle involved is, at best, one of temporary rather than one of permanent significance. Everything which is accomplished so laboriously and awkwardly by means of interdenominational agencies could be accomplished much more expeditiously and satisfactorily through organic union. None the less, as a step toward something better, interdenominationalism, like federation, has been worth while. People can not hope to think together or work together until they become acquainted with each other. These movements among and between denominations have helped us all to get acquainted. They have thus rendered valuable service.

2. The Y. M. C. A. The first great interdenominational movement was that of the Young Men's Christian Association, founded by Sir George Williams in 1844. This organization has achieved world-wide renown and has successfully commanded the support of members of all Protestant communions. In 1910 the year book of the association showed 1,914 local Y. M. C. A.'s in America, with a total membership of nearly half a million, and an active membership of 188,274. There were 237 railroad associations, and the property valuation of the assets of the organization was \$62,800,000. Along with the growth and development of the Y. M. C. A. must be noted that of its sister organization, the Y. W. C. A. Both of these associations have confined their attention to practical Christian service, and have therefore had little direct bearing upon church unity. The common fellowship of a common task has been productive of a better feeling, however, and denominational corners have been worn smooth by constant elbowing in the Y. M. C. A.

3. The Y. P. S. C. E. In 1881 a Congregational minister in Portland, Maine, organized his young people into a band for definite church work and called the organization the "Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor." The man and the movement have both become famous. At the end of eighteen years there were over fifty thousand societies and over three million members. When the society celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its birth

the number of local organizations had increased to over seventy-three thousand, and every Protestant denomination as well as every country on the globe found representation in the list. Moreover, large numbers of young people were grouped in the denominational organizations which split off from the main stem, such as the Epworth and Luther Leagues, the B. Y. P. U. and others.

The Y. P. S. C. E. has been a much more important factor in helping the union sentiment than the Y. M. C. A. The latter hardly touched the church life at all, while the Christian Endeavor works primarily and directly through the churches. The tremendous influence of this common fellowship of young people was speedily recognized by the older advocates of denominationalism, with the result that they took prompt steps to head it off, by organizing separate denominational societies patterned after the Y. P. S. C. E. When one thinks of Christians thus deliberately turning aside one of the greatest movements for the early fulfillment of our Lord's prayer for unity ever inaugurated, he can not help again re-echoing John Wesley's sentiment about "why the Lord's people can not allow Satan to do his own work." If there is one thing in which the powers of evil must rejoice, it is disunion and division in the ranks of the opposition. We can only deeply deplore that blinded sectarianism which split the great Christian Endeavor movement into fragments when it might so easily have been one.

Notwithstanding the attacks of denominational

leaders, the Endeavor movement has forged ahead. It is noteworthy that the denominations and churches in which it is strongest are also the communions in which the sentiment for union is strongest to-day. When the history of the reunion of Christendom is finally written, a bright page must be reserved for the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor and for its founder, Francis E. Clark.

4. The Laymen's Movement The Laymen's Movement was born in a prayer-meeting in the city of New York, November 15, 1906. There were about fifty men present, and the little group seemed to give slight emphasis to the idea that they were to start a movement which in a few years would work a revolution. It is questionable whether any modern crusade has meant more, however, for the real progress of the church. The Laymen's Movement caught hold of two fundamental facts. First, that the church, to succeed, must act as a whole—both pastor and people; and, second, that actions and service are essential factors in the Christian life of the every-day man. The movement has already more than doubled the gifts to all missionary enterprises in the churches where it has worked, and in some it has accomplished even greater results. It has been an interdenominational organization, and, like Federation and Christian Endeavor, has linked Christians together in practical service and charity. Its influence upon the cause of unity has been thus expressed by Dr. Samuel B. Capen:

"The movement has done much to promote unity in the Church. In past years we have been divided into differing camps, and each denomination has been thinking only of its own interests; all this has been changed. In this movement, which is both interdenominational and international, there are no more rivalries; we are not building up denominations and sects, but the Kingdom of God. We have really forgotten our sectarian tags; it is now all for each and each for all. The movement has helped to bring about a greater practical co-operation between mission boards. The recognition of their common cause is making them stand together. At interdenominational conferences they learn of others' works, and are inspired by what others are doing to lead their own denominations to do more. . . . In conventions and conferences, where all meet upon a common platform, the best of all is gotten, the best methods, the finest enthusiasm and the true principles upon which the work rests. For a hundred years the Church has wasted much of its strength in profitless discussions; we are trying to hush that voice that we may more distinctly hear the cry of humanity and the voice of God. In the judgment of some, this is the greatest work of the Laymen's Movement."¹

5. The Unity
Commissions

With the rapidly increasing interest in union on the part of all the Protestant churches has come the establishment of "Commissions" to

¹ "Men and Missions," address of Dr. S. B. Capen at meeting of General Laymen's Committees, New York, Feb. 22, 1911.

develop, foster and direct the progress of the unity sentiment. The earliest of these commissions were "The Christian Unity Foundation" of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the "Committee on Comity, Federation and Unity" of the Congregational churches, and the "Commission on Christian Union" of the Churches of Christ. These three commissions were all established the same year and at about the same time in that year. The president of the Unity Foundation is the Rt. Rev. Frederick Courtney, of New York; the chairman of the Congregationalist committee, Dr. Wm. Hayes Ward, of New York, and the chairman of the Christian Commission, Dr. Peter Ainslie, of Baltimore. Later the Presbyterian Church in America appointed a committee on "Church Co-operation and Union," of which Rev. W. H. Roberts, D.D., of Philadelphia, is chairman, and nearly all of the other Protestant churches have appointed committees or commissions dealing with phases of the union problem. These organizations have met together at intervals, and much progress has been achieved in the way of further developing the union sentiment. The World Conference on Faith and Order has largely occupied the attention of most of the commissions and has further helped their work. It is not too much to say that the union idea is now paramount in the minds of a large number of the leaders of Christian thought in America. Rapid development and progress may be expected along these lines in the near future.

6. Union Literature

The literature of Christian union has begun to bulk large in the religious world. One of the finest developments in this line was the establishment, in March, 1913, of the *Constructive Quarterly*, a "journal of the faith, work and thought of Christendom." The editor, Mr. Silas McBee, formerly at the head of the *Churchman*, is one of the devoted advocates of Christian unity, and his journal seems destined to play a large and valuable part in the coming reunion of the church. The editorial board of the *Quarterly* contains representatives of practically the whole of present-day Christendom, including all of the Protestant churches as well as the Orthodox Greek and Roman Catholic communions. In the introductory statement published in the first issue of the *Quarterly*, the purpose of the journal was thus defined by the editor:

"This journal has been founded on the conviction that a constructive treatment of Christianity will make for a better understanding between the isolated communions of Christendom. It is called the CONSTRUCTIVE QUARTERLY because it attempts to build on what the Christian churches are actually believing, doing and thinking. The destructive method has had its full opportunity, and will continue to have it and ought to have it. But it has developed no power to unite and is most effective in promoting division.

"The plan is to bring together members of all communions who will write constructively of the

Christianity they profess and practice, in order that others may know their communion as they themselves would desire to have it known. It is not neutral territory that is sought, where courtesy and diplomacy would naturally tend to avoid issues and to round off the sharp edges of truth and conviction, but rather common ground, where loyalty to Christ and to convictions about him and his Church will be secure from the tendency to mere compromise or to superficial and artificial comprehension. The purpose is to create an atmosphere of mutual confidence, of mutual knowledge, of mutual desire for fellowship. In such an atmosphere it should be easier to believe in others at their best, without minimizing the real causes of separation. . . .

“Von Moltke’s motto, ‘March apart, strike together!’ was the key to all of his strategy. The great field marshal used the initiative and individuality of men and armies in order to secure unity of impact. Must the forces of Christendom always strike separately against the enemies of humanity? Is it not possible to lay the foundations for a greater unity by combining against the foes that threaten the very citadels of the home and society? When once the Christian churches mean to understand and devote their life to understanding one another in Christ and his Church, they will strike together with a scope and a power that no military symbol could ever express. A united Christianity would be incomparably greater than all its parts because it would be the manifestation of Chris-

tianity itself, the witness for which Christ prayed. . . . The immediate purpose of the *QUARTERLY* is to induce a better understanding and a truer sense of fellowship. Its final hope is the unity of the family of God in the body of Christ, where the liberty of the children of God will be attained.”¹

The *Quarterly* has well maintained the purpose of its editor. It has already acquired a large constituency, and the frank presentation of widely differing points of view is proving exceedingly helpful to all who read its pages. The magazine should be read by Christians everywhere, and will doubtless assume more commanding importance as the years pass on. Mr. McBee's irenic spirit is ideal from the point of view of constructive Christianity.

A smaller journal devoted to similar purposes is the *Christian Union Quarterly* (first published as the “Christian Union Library”), the official organ of the Commission on Christian Union of the Churches of Christ. The editor of this magazine is Peter Ainslie. He is one of the foremost figures in the universal Christian union movement of the present day. The *Christian Union Quarterly* does not reach so large a constituency as the *Constructive Quarterly* and is not so ambitious a publication. Its aim is to be a sort of clearing-house for Christian unity sentiment. It publishes articles from many different angles. It has readers in all denominations and has been well received from the first.

¹ *Constructive Quarterly*, Vol. I., No. 1, Introduction by the Editor.

Of books on Christian union and kindred subjects, the number which have appeared during recent years is legion. The Canadian movement has found expression in an admirable volume from the pen of Mr. A. S. Morton, entitled "The Way to Union," published by Briggs, of Toronto. The volume entitled "Church Union," by Briggs, is a helpful book. Bishop Brown's "The Level Plan for Church Union," published by Whittaker (1910), is a stimulating statement from the broader Anglican point of view. Mr. Amos R. Wells' excellent plea entitled "That They All May be One" is an earlier plea from one of the great Christian Endeavor leaders of the present generation. One of the latest and most significant books upon the subject is "The Message of the Disciples of Christ for the Union of the Church," by Peter Ainslie (Revell, 1913). This volume contains Dr. Ainslie's Yale lectures, delivered before the Yale Divinity School, 1912-13. It is irenic, full of interest and stimulating. It is commanding words of approval from widely separated churches in all communions. A fuller bibliography on Christian union will be appended to the present treatise, as we do not have space to refer specifically to other books on the subject in the present chapter.

7. A Hopeful View

We have treated, after a very brief and comprehensive fashion, the fascinating history of the union of the Church, its separation, and the progress toward a new union. There have been many things in the story which must cause all

Christians deep feelings of regret, and yet the picture is one which contains elements of optimism as well. The past has shown conclusively that union, to be vital, must be based upon freedom of conscience and religious conviction. No arbitrary ecclesiasticism based upon force or tyranny can ever hold Christendom together. Better a dis-united Church than a Church held together by absolutism. The Reformation sounded the note of freedom, and that note will never be silenced either in church or in state. The preservation of liberty is not, however, inconsistent with the unity for which Christ prayed; it is rather its indispensable prerequisite. The unity of the early Church was a unity which gave the largest freedom to both individuals and churches, and the later unity of the Church will be of the same character. The widespread feeling for unity in all communions takes full note of this fact. Much of the present opposition to closer co-operation is grounded in a perfectly legitimate fear of losing the priceless heritage of freedom. When men and churches can be convinced that they can unite their forces without sacrificing conscientious convictions and the spirit of liberty, there will be little worthy objection to coming together. There will still remain the most serious element of opposition, that is to say, the presence of unworthy motives, such as prejudice, vested interests, bigotry and denominational pride, but in the nature of things these unworthy motives must in the end pass away. One of the chief things that will help them to pass is the spirit of

earnest prayer and the devotional attitude toward the problem. It is characteristic of latter-day Christianity that this motive is constantly being brought to the foreground. The literature of the World Conference on Faith and Order is saturated with it, and prayers for unity are going up from devout Christians everywhere. Jesus' great appeal for the union of his followers was couched in the form of a prayer, and his followers will do well to follow his example. Another significant factor is the effort toward a better understanding of the diverse creeds and polities of the divided Church on the part of all Christians. People are not kept apart by facts, but by prejudices, and the clear, frank statement of the real facts will help greatly toward an ultimate solution. When the rubbish of bias and bigotry is brushed aside, it is being discerned that Christianity is really one in essentials and that non-essentials ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of the triumph of essential principles. It is inconceivable that genuine Christians will long permit such a contradiction of logical Christianity to rule. Prayer combined with clear and exact knowledge can not but lead to the glorious consummation which will mean so much to the progress of the Church.

In the meantime, we believe, as we are able to see the facts, that the only significant and definite basis for practical union remains that of the great Restoration movement founded by the Campbells and Stone. Here, at least, is a definite plea upon which Christians may unite and preserve the essen-

tials of the common faith. The remarkable progress of this plea is a proof of its vital power and of its value for the present age. Many Christians do not as yet appreciate its significance and others are dubious of the solution which it presents, but, despite all misunderstandings and faults of presentation, it remains the one great, definite, practical and distinct plea for Christian union. Dr. J. B. Remensnyder, the president of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in commenting upon Peter Ainslie's Yale lectures, says of the book that "its basis is the only possible one for reunion; viz., the absolute divinity of Christ and the authority of the Holy Scriptures." Dr. Remensnyder dissents from the position of the book at certain points, but his general statement holds good none the less. If there is a practical plan for the reunion of Christendom other than that of the restoration of the apostolic Church, it has not been suggested thus far.

For those who advocate the Restoration plea, the situation is heartening and encouraging. At the same time, it is one of tremendous responsibility. Unless there is advocacy and appreciation of the broad lines of the plea and emphasis only upon essentials, the work must lead to inevitable failure. It is quite easy to make a non-sectarian plea narrowly sectarian by advocating it in the wrong spirit and by a misplaced emphasis upon non-essentials. The Restorationists have not entirely escaped this pitfall in their history of the past hundred years, and have failed at many points because of this fact.

Success, in this world, depends not only upon principles, but also upon men. However correct we may be in theory, if our presentation of the truth is marred by intolerance, by discourtesy, by narrowness of vision, or by still more unworthy characteristics, it can make but little progress. These statements are made in charity and as admonitions rather than criticisms. The writer believes that the plea of the Campbells and Stone would be the dominant force in Christendom to-day if it had been presented at all times with breadth, charity and in the fullest irenic spirit. Its partial failure has been due to a lack of appreciation of these fundamental data of religion and life.

For the rest, we can only hope that this little volume will contribute in a slight way to a better understanding of the facts regarding Christian union, and that its spirit has been such as to win rather than repel men in their longings for ultimate unity. We can not conclude our study without quoting Mr. Amos R. Wells' significant catechism upon the sins of dissension.

**8. Wells' Little
Catechism
for Christians**

Question—How many denominations are there in the United States?

Answer—One hundred and eighty-six, according to the latest census.

Ques.—How many denominations were disbanded in the interval?

Ans.—Twelve.

¹ "A Little Catechism for Christians," by Amos R. Wells, published in the "Christian Union Library," October, 1911.

Ques.—How many were merged with other denominations?

Ans.—Four.

Ques.—How many wholly new denominations were added to the list?

Ans.—Forty-eight.

Ques.—Were there other additions to the denominations?

Ans.—Yes; some denominations split in two.

Ques.—How many Baptist denominations exist in the United States?

Ans.—Sixteen.

Ques.—How many Lutheran?

Ans.—Thirty-four.

Ques.—How many Methodist?

Ans.—Fifteen.

Ques.—How many Presbyterian?

Ans.—Twelve.

Ques.—What reason is given for the existence of these 186 denominations?

Ans.—That each perpetuates a valuable principle and struggles for its acceptance.

Ques.—Then, each denomination at present lacks 185 valuable principles possessed respectively by the 185 other denominations?

Ans.—M-a-y-b-e.

Ques.—Any other reason?

Ans.—That varying types of human minds naturally require different types of creed and forms of church government and worship.

Ques.—Then, there are 186 different types of human minds?

Ans.—It would seem so.

Ques.—Is this division of our Christian forces into 186 sundered camps a good thing?

Ans.—Yes—for the devil.

And as the final word of all, may we not join in that prayer suggested for all Christians by the Joint Commission for the World Conference on Faith and Order?

“O God of peace, who through thy Son Jesus Christ didst set forth one faith for the salvation of mankind, send thy grace and heavenly blessing upon all Christian people who are striving to draw nearer to thee, and to each other, in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace. Give us penitence for our divisions, wisdom to know thy truth, courage to do thy will, love which shall break down the barriers of pride and prejudice, and an unswerving loyalty to thy holy name. Suffer us not to shrink from any endeavor, which is in accordance with thy will, for the peace and unity of thy Church. Give us boldness to seek only thy glory and the advancement of thy Kingdom. Unite us all in thee as thou, O Father, with thy Son and the Holy Spirit, are one God, world without end. Amen.”

Questions

1. What is meant by the interdenominational idea?
2. Sketch the history and progress of the Y. M. C. A.
3. Give the history of the Y. P. S. C. E.
4. How has the spirit of denominationalism affected the Endeavor movement?
5. Outline the Laymen's Missionary Movement.
6. What can you say of the Unity Commissions?
7. What is the *Constructive Quarterly*?
8. Mention some of the standard works on Christian union.
9. What elements of optimism does the movement toward union disclose?
10. What legitimate opposition is sometimes made to efforts toward union?
11. What are the most hopeful features of the present situation in regard to unity?
12. What position does the Restoration plea occupy in present-day movements toward Christian union?
13. Be prepared to answer the questions in Wells' Catechism.

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